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- Herbal Medicine • Layer Ducks
- Healthy Tucker • Garden Feng Shui
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Back Cover: How's this for an appealing outdoor dunny? Photo by Marcel Aucar.

Edited by Megg Miller and Mary Horsfall.

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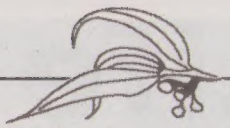


GUMNUT GOSSIP

by Megg Miller.

Having a day away from the office is always a treat, but to go off to a farm expo and talk with lots of people, taste local fare and buy knick-knacks for the garden is like Christmas and Easter rolled into one. With the Seymour Expo virtually on our doorstep, it's not too time consuming to set up a small stall and meet and chat with past and present readers. Sue usually does the first day and Suni and I share the weekend, but this year she put her foot down and said, 'No, I need a break from it and I want to go to a seminar that I booked months ago'. Although we only stayed for two of the three days, Sue and I had a great time putting faces to names, catching up with people who have been on the cover at one time or another, including Robyn and Phil, stars of our last issue, and asking readers what they enjoy most in *Grass Roots*. Surprisingly, many said all the handy tips and hints. We gathered that they meant an article that might discuss an idea they hadn't heard about before, or describe a way of doing an activity that particularly suited their circumstances. It is exciting to discover an easier way to eradicate weeds or garden pests, or to realise there are more ways still to use up all your zucchinis or pumpkins. So, dear writers, your idiosyncratic ways of doing everything from building to taking a train trip or camping holiday are not only considered, commented upon or discarded as too involved or nutty, but many readers take them on board and use them to advantage. So keep your handy hints and tips coming; someone, somewhere is waiting ready to pounce on them, saying, 'That's exactly what I need to be doing'.

Last issue I meant to discuss photos, but it slipped my mind, so while we're focusing on 'doing', I should talk about what we need now that digital cameras are commonplace. Digital shots are fine, and the usual rules of keeping backgrounds simple and not squeezing too much into a single frame apply. Where this system comes unstuck is sending us home print-outs on low-grade paper. They simply don't reproduce clearly. Even if they have been outputted in a professional photo shop, there is a strong likelihood they won't reproduce. We suggest when sending in contributions you provide a range of available photos on cheap paper, so you don't incur unnecessary costs. Then when we accept and are ready to use the story we can request copies of the original digital files as jpgs and they can be saved on a disk and posted to us. A separate disk for each article please. We're wary of being inundated with emailed pics with insufficient data to identify the images with the correct story. Mary says there is already a pervading atmosphere of mayhem and mania in the office, we don't want to add to it.

What's sending us in a spin? A combination of events really. The community in the hills around where Sue lives holds an annual art show in March and both Sue and her hubby Trevor are heavily involved, so Sue has been frantically busy. Suni has just started leave and, although she endeavoured to get everything organised before she left and even returned the first day of her break, it's been full on. Both Mary and I have had meetings we've had to take time off for, so when you add all this together it does lead to mayhem.

Fortunately, the rest of our world has been relatively calm and collected. A letter we received from regular contributor June Grondin was accompanied by an old copy of a magazine called *The Writers News*, with a section marked for our attention. 'This magazine fell out when I had an avalanche of saved materials from a cupboard. On reading it through later, the words *Grass Roots* leapt out from an article at me. The writer of the article, Geoff O'Callaghan, mentioned he was launched on his career by the placing of his work in GR, as I suspect many other budding writers have been', wrote June. Her note had been prompted by acceptance of several pieces of her work, which she wrote when housebound and recovering from surgery. 'The thought of GR and getting the work away was like fuel to the pumps', she said. We know that just getting a letter away to Feedback inspires other readers to get up and about when they're not feeling A1. We're glad June has recovered fully and delighted to have played a part in boosting Geoff's writing career.

While writing is still on the tip of my pen, please can we see some of the responses to Feedback enquiries? We read and reread the letters as we prepare the magazine for the press and wonder how people resolve problems, sort out their sciatica and track down nearly impossible to find seeds or books. Over the years many responders to Feedback enquiries have sent a copy of their answer in for sharing with readers and it would be wonderful for everyone if this system could get going again. Feedback is still the most popular item in GR because it's so interesting and helpful; with everyone's assistance we can make it better still.

One of the fascinating things about catching up with readers, whether it's in person, on the phone, or through letter writing, is hearing how everyone responds when their brown paper parcel arrives. Some people confess to turning straight to Feedback, or the Grassifieds if they're looking for land, or to this column. 'I read everything from cover to cover and as I have a nice big bundle on the bookshelf, I go back and reread and wonder, as always, how you and the team manage to produce such a marvellous magazine', one long-term city reader wrote. Dawn, another reader of many years, said she stays up all night reading and then wishes she hadn't because it's another two months before the next mag arrives. Friends of mine confess that dinner is a scrap affair the day GR turns up on the table. They gulp it down and head for bed and a good read, but I suspect it takes them more than one night to read it all and the meals are perfunctory until the magazine is finished.

When we get it back from the printers it's welcomed with a sigh of relief. When there's time to read it, it's all new and we can't put it down either.

An Organic Life

by Megg Miller, Nagambie, Vic.

Imagine feeling so satisfied about your work that you feel crooked charging for it. Jackie O'Reilly enjoys both her produce growing business and her goat hobby that much.

Organic grower Jackie O'Reilly said the characteristics needed to set up and run an on-farm fruit and vegie business without compromising deeply held beliefs were apparent even when she was a child. She loved vegies and happily ate her Brussels sprouts. She found weeding, a punishment meted out for teenage naughtiness, intriguing rather than boring. Although the tight structure of secondary school rankled, her results, especially in biology, enabled her to do nursing studies. She soon realised her interest lay more in preventative health, but the skills picked up during those years have proved invaluable. Add to these the sense of independence gained from solo travel through rural Europe and you had a questioning individual who wouldn't be able to settle into a nine to five work routine, one who wanted real food and, when that wasn't immediately forthcoming, felt a driving urge to grow her own.

These days, Jackie runs O'Reilly's Orchard with husband David, of which her goat stud, Watts Gully British Alpines, forms an integral part.

Jackie said: 'A couple of times people said to me, "Oh, you're organic", because I became somewhat obsessed about my food. In 1983 a lady gave me a copy of *Grass Roots* and someone else told me about the people at Four Leaf Milling. I wasn't alone after all. Meeting up with David 15 years ago was in part the catalyst for a career with food. He told me that he got grumpy when hungry. I lamely replied that with me he would never have to worry about food again! I didn't tell him that I came with my own menagerie, however.

'David and I share complementary skills and have been able to learn much from each other. I was greatly relieved when he announced during negotiations to purchase our current property 12 years ago that he would give it 15 years. I knew then he had a good grip on the reality of embarking on a primary production enterprise.'

ESTABLISHING THE ORCHARD

O'Reilly's Orchard began life as a 40-year-old run-down stone fruit orchard at Wirrabara Forest in South Australia. Everything on the seven-hectare property needed repairing or renovating, and that included not only the fruit trees and equipment, but even the soil. On the plus side, it had decent underground water and was set amidst a stunning, isolated, fairly clean environment in a pocket of 650-millimetre annual rainfall.

'After five years', said Jackie, 'we made a decision to stick with fruit and began replanting to further diversify existing crops. We also began to slowly expand our vegetable beds. It was at this point we made the decision to market produce locally. I was becoming convinced the conventional distribution system doesn't suit small organic horticultural growers. As well, I've become increasingly irritated that fresh organic food is priced out of the ordinary person's reach on supermarket shelves. I only need to appeal to a small population of the local community and nothing can equal word of mouth.

Jackie and David in their abundant garden.

'Farm gate sales and supplying seasonal mixed boxes of produce to regulars are our main markets, though a newly set up local producers' market has also been successful. This system requires a high level of organisation and coordination and the ability to be a bit laid back when things get intense. Embracing the internet with a site explaining what we do made sense time-wise or else we could be on the phone all day. Prospective clients can check out our activities or make an enquiry, and regulars can adjust their order. It's the ideal forum too for promoting the concept of a small, diversified farming model that is striving for sustainable ecology and at the same time getting the results to the end user while still fresh and nutritious and at a fair price.'

TWELVE YEARS ON

Jackie found that establishing an organic business hasn't been an easy road.

'I've followed my heart instead of potential dollars. People value what we and other certified organic producers do, but don't want to pay much. Because the orchard and gardens and the goat herd are so incredibly satisfying and fundamentally necessary to all of our vitality, I feel almost crooked charging for the produce.

'If someone had told us 10 years ago what point in the journey we would be at today I would have found it hard to believe. We're busy with our seasonal boxes and other sales, with hosted meals in our kitchen and looking after our beautiful goats. It's exciting imagining what the next decade holds and how we can continue to mix and marry ideals and monetary return.'

Goats Are Easy

by Jackie O'Reilly, Wirrabara, SA.

Jackie became a goat keeper when the family needed fresh milk. Goats were the obvious solution because their milk is easily digested and they utilise spoilt garden produce and clean up finished crops. We asked Jackie to share her goat keeping know-how with us.

I started out with goats because my research had led me to understand that it was the best milk for my babies. My choice to actually purchase one was made easy by the facts that goats in general are tractable and I lived on a small acreage with enough space for them. During initial enquiries I found the breeders I visited to be friendly and professional and fortunately the milk I tasted during my visits was as it should be: sweet, nutty and delicious.

My first milking doe was purchased in 1984 and just happened to be a registered British Alpine. In my early days I did dabble with other breeds, but the lively, intelligent, adventurous character of the British Alpine won me over and the breed is a real eye-catcher. Alpines are also very responsive to people, adaptable and easy to train.

Over the last 20 years I have found that my goats produce an average of three litres a day at four percent butterfat. These figures vary over the course of lactation, but this seems to be a consistent amount that they settle into, after their initial peak. The beauty of Alpines is their ability to stay in milk (if they're not mated and are consistently milked at least once a day). Long lactations are a bonus for those who don't particularly want to breed or spend time accessing bucks. Usually the does have twins or triplets, with an occasional single kid. Only once have I had quads. Sometimes a newborn has a little trouble figuring out the self-service and I make it a routine during kidding to check them out individually. Observation is the key to success. Generally the mothers are very patient.

Before telling you about the management of my goats I must stress that goats are very adaptable and there are many 'right' ways to go about it. I find goats are happy with open-sided shelter sheds with deep-litter bedding. My goats are contained to large yards/small paddocks, of which I have three, covering around one hectare. Each paddock offers shade and a variety of forage. These are fenced with 15 x 15-centimetre cyclone mesh to 90 centimetres high, with cheaper, ordinary sheep netting used to give extra height. This is the most successful system I have tried and I've found it is a big key to happy goat keeping. Having said this, I know folk who fence their garden in like this and their goats camp on their verandah, along with the pet dogs, and virtually free range on their bush block.

BRITISH ALPINE GOATS

Well-bred, healthy British Alpines are striking animals, tall, rangy and graceful, well boned without being coarse or heavy. Their glossy black coats are at their best from late summer. The white Swiss markings form facial stripes from above the eyes to the muzzle and on the muzzle, edges and tips of ears, legs from the knees and hocks down, insides of legs to the trunk, on the rump and under the base of the tail. Their skin colour is grey-black.

My goats are hand-fed ad lib quality hay, with milkers, pregnant does and young kids getting a grain ration as well. I have found hay on demand to be a great insurance for everything from digestive problems to providing a buffer should the goats ingest something slightly toxic. Being browsers, goats need dry, high-fibre food. They are not naturally inclined to graze dewy grasses and giving them a ready alternative will reduce their risk of high worm burdens. This has also meant that, at present, despite having had no real rain since November last year, their paddocks have not been bared out and still have dried vegetation holding the soil together.

Fortunately, our extensive garden also supports the goats' diet with a great deal of diversity. Leftovers from sweet corn and brassica crops are hot favourites and they prefer overgrown zucchinis to cucumbers! I grow sunflowers for them as well as for my own enjoyment. We have a native vegetation planting program and many of these species are suitable to prune for goat fodder.

Is what we get back worth all the effort? Well, the interesting thing is the goats are so easy to look after and are a tremendously companionable animal. The meat from the wethers is tender and lean and not at all greasy like sheep meat. I am fortunate to have an electric separator and the cream is used for ice cream as well as on cold-morning porridge and in winter desserts. Excess cream I blend with flour into a dough and freeze. It is such a successfully simple and very elastic pastry – and to think I only discovered this two years ago.

Even if I do say so myself, I am a great pie cook, so it was a somewhat belated and frustrating discovery when I thought back on all the years of butter making. Skimmed milk is very suitable for soaking grain in for poultry and pigs and our three dogs seem to appreciate it too.

Last but not least, the goats give back tonnes of composting material for the garden, which is scooped up from in and around their sheds. This waste is placed in piles throughout the gardens in late winter/early spring and the warming spring rains work their magic, making it ready for use by November.

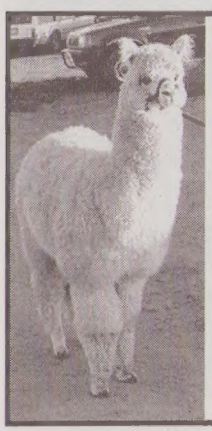
The hardest part of keeping my beautiful goats is parting with them, but I can't keep them all. My main purpose in goat breeding these days is to help maintain viable bloodlines so that British Alpines can continue to exist. I found out very early on that the low genetic pool produced problems, so decided I'd do goats properly and joined the Dairy Goat Society. Unfortunately, goats are more highly regarded by overseas buyers than they are domestically and many breeders have turned to this growing export market.

I like my milkers to go to families who are looking for a supply of quality milk from well-behaved and healthy animals. Younger stock is a lot more adaptable. All of my stock would make good foundation animals for anyone who might be looking to go on breeding with them. The whole herd has been routinely tested free of CAE and Johne's disease since 1990.

Wondering what you might pay for a British Alpine? Over the last 12 months I have sold stock for between $150 and $400, plus GST, and I believe this is around what most breeders charge. Even if you are not a member of the Dairy Goat Society, you should expect that the breeder will transfer the animal. You will then get a letter notifying you of this and a copy of the animal's pedigree.

Another avenue of enquiry is the British Alpine Breeders Group of Australia Inc. Their Secretary is G Keays, RMB 8680, Bannockburn 3331.

Check out the range of healthy recipes and seasonal activities at O'Reilly's Orchard at www.oreillysorchard.com.au
Photos by Clive Palmer, SA.



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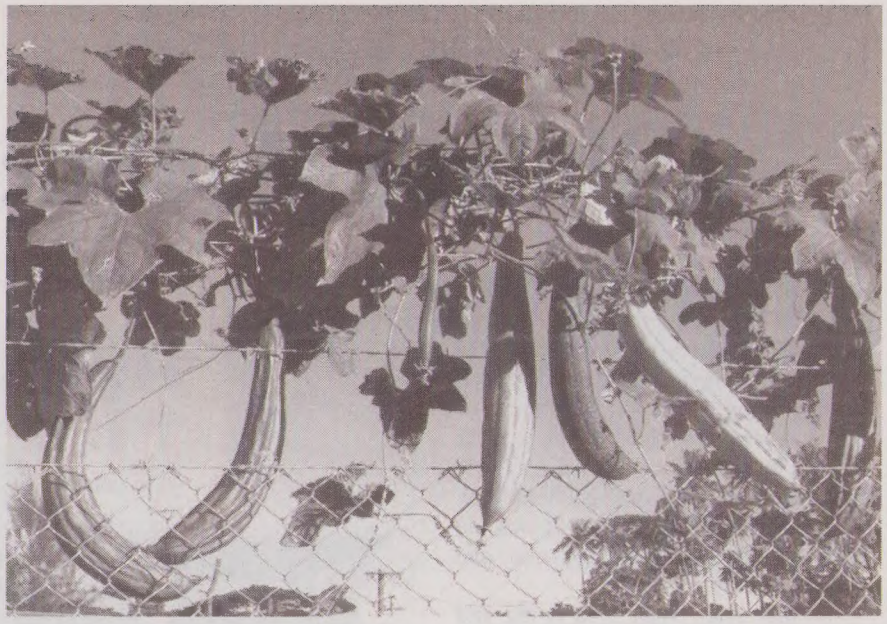
Lather With A Loofah



by Bob Rankin, Apia, Samoa.

Isn't it odd how you can go through life and still not discover the simplest things? I have been enjoying a couple of showers a day for nearly 80 years, but never realised how really invigorating a shower could be until I used my first loofah that I harvested last week.

Loofahs are natural sponges that grow inside what looks like a large cucumber. Like cucumbers, they prefer a warm moist climate and are very easy to grow.

I have tried growing just about everything, but didn't get around to trying loofahs until I came across a packet of seeds in a garden shop. I don't know whether the seeds I got were too old, but only one strong seedling emerged in my seed bed. I transplanted this seedling beside my two-metre-high wire mesh back fence and have never seen a plant grow so fast.

In four months this one yellow-flowered plant spread along the entire top of the 20-metre-long fence and was loaded with more than 30 loofahs about 35 centimetres long. After about four months they started to ripen, turning from green to yellow/brown and then almost black. You harvest the loofah when it turns dark and you can hear the seeds rattle inside the shell when you shake it. Pull it off the vine, cut off the tip of the larger end and try to shake out all the small black seeds. Then soak the loofah in a bucket of water for a few minutes so the shell easily peels off and exposes the sponge. Take out the sponge, squeeze out any seeds left inside it and soak it in a bucket of water with a cup of bleach in it for 10 minutes or so. That's all there is to it. Rinse it in clean water and put it out in the sun to dry, cut it up into any size sponge you like, then put it in the shower. After using it to soap and scrub yourself you'll come out with your skin tingling as never before. As I tell my friends, after a shower using a loofah you feel like dancing in the street.

The increased blood circulation that the loofah induces in the skin not only makes you feel good, but is said to provide relief for rheumatism and arthritis sufferers. You'll find all sorts of other uses for a loofah around the kitchen. You can even use young green loofah as a tasty addition to a stew!

Each loofah has hundreds of small black seeds. Save some for your next crop. I've fed the surplus to my chooks. I learnt too late that loofah shouldn't be grown near cucumber or other cucubits if you want to use the seed. They tend to cross-pollinate and mightn't come out as expected. Always the optimist, I've planted some anyway and am hoping for the best.

If you want to try something new and useful in your garden, I recommend trying your hand at loofahs. I guarantee that a few months later, when you try it in the shower, you'll be pleased you did. Loofahs are nontoxic, biodegradable, easy to grow, have attractive leaves and flowers and have myriad uses around the house. What more could a gardener ask?

Husking loofah is fun for the whole family. Here Bob Rankin and grandson Ian peel the skin back to expose the loofah after it has been soaking in water for a few minutes. Son Broderick watches from his tricycle and grandson Foster watches from the shade. Dried and bleached loofahs are displayed on the table at the right.

A Unique Mudbrick Home

by Gwen Leane, Port Augusta, SA.

It was a holiday weekend and Mary Tothill was staying in Wilmington, a small country town in the mid north of South Australia. While taking a walk along Peppermint Box Road in 1989, Mary saw a bare 15-acre paddock with a 'for sale' sign on the gate. It was the land dreams are made of and she bought it there and then.

At that stage Mary was living and working in Adelaide, but decided to look for work in the nearby regional city of Port Augusta. She found a job as a Landcare officer for the Department of Primary Industries and Research.

'First came the trees and then the house', Mary said. Each weekend she would travel up from Adelaide and plant eucalypts and acacias indigenous to the area, some of which she obtained from Trees for Life and others she propagated from seeds collected as she travelled throughout the region. Today the land is a paradise for birds, lizards, kangaroos and any other creature that needs a home. The stand-out feature, however, is Mary's delightful mud-brick home.

The house and garden complement each other and reflect Mary's love of nature.

THE PLAN

'I'd had an idea for a house in my mind for many years, and I made a plan that I put on the fridge door for a while. It was very hard for me to envisage how much space I would need until I realised the house would be just for me and not everybody else. I love it now', Mary said.

A friend drew up the plans, which Mary took to an engineer to be fine-tuned. 'It could be over-engineered', Mary said. 'But it certainly won't blow down.'

The lounge and dining area have large windows because Mary wanted lots of light. Despite so much glass, the house is cool in summer and warm in winter. 'People laughed at me because I got my compass out and made sure it was true magnetic north', Mary said. 'But it's the way I wanted it. It means that in winter the sun is low down in the sky and warms the house through all the glass. In the summer the sun is high overhead and insulation in the roof keeps the house cool.'

The ground floor consists of a lounge, dining area, galley kitchen, study, bathroom/toilet and laundry. There is a mezzanine floor, which has become the bedroom, and beneath it is the study and wet area. The roof enclosing the mezzanine is an A-frame.

THE BUILDING

The Muddy Mix

Mary wanted a house that was environmentally friendly and so chose to build with mudbricks. An amateur builder can make and lay mudbricks, however, the location of a site where the necessary components for brick making are found will make the job easier.

- Clay is needed as a binding, but clay also shrinks and causes the bricks to crack.
- Sand as a component does not shrink and, when mixed with clay, balances out shrinkage.
- Stones have no shrinkage and will put strength into the bricks. Too much stone in the mix, however, will make it hard to mix the mud and difficult to cut the formed bricks and will weaken the end product.
- Straw or hay act as a binder, but if too much is added will weaken the product. Straw needs to be cut into 15-centimetre lengths.
- Grass can be used, though straw is stronger and it will not rot.

Working With A Builder

Because she worked full time Mary thought that making the bricks herself would take too long, so took the short cut and bought her bricks from a manufacturer in Adelaide. She calculated that this was cheaper than buying the separate components. The bricks consist of mud and straw and are large enough that no inside veneer is needed other than a silicone paint to seal the bricks.

Mary hired a local builder, Mr Plevins. 'You supply the bricks and I'll build it', he said.

Mr Plevins regarded the job as a

challenge because he'd never built with mudbricks before. However, he found that because the plans were well drawn there were no dramas.

A damp course and a row of fired bricks were laid first. The mudbricks were laid on top. The house is of a post and beam construction. The posts hold up the beams and the bricks fill in the gaps. One challenge for the builder was that mudbricks are not always the same size, so the mud bed had to be adjusted to compensate in order to keep the building square.

The uprights are Oregon and to erect and set them in their footings and cement them was not easy. Crossbeams are of laminated Oregon and give the house a cosy and secure atmosphere.

One bonus of hiring a local builder was that he and Mary could, at the end of each day, spend a short time discussing the next step and ironing out any difficulties that might have arisen. 'It is important to have a good working relationship with the builder', Mary advised. 'Otherwise work can founder.'

Mr Plevins believes the house was not cost efficient to build, but 'is ecofriendly, of a good design and the end result is good'. He also believes it is a good alternative to a budget house of the type being built in Adelaide.

Large windows let in light, but the verandah and thick walls maintain a comfortable indoor temperature.

ADDITIONS AND ENHANCEMENTS

Later, a self-contained guest room was added, also of mudbrick. A breezeway linking the two sections allows for a flow of cool air between. A verandah surrounds the two sections to keep the weather from the walls. The outside walls have also been treated with silicone paint.

A pergola has been built on the western side of the house. Vines planted over it will add a cooling effect during the heat of summer, but will let in winter sun after leaf fall.

An overhead fan has been installed in the living area for use during times of extreme heat. In the middle of the open living area sits a potbelly stove, situated so heat rises to warm the bedroom above.

Power And Water

Mary is planning to install a solar electricity system and be connected to the grid. She is connected to mains water, but large tanks on the house and shed supply all her water needs from an annual rainfall of about 500 millimetres per year.

Decor From Nature

Her work as a field officer has enabled Mary to bring home many treasures of dead limbs and rocks. These treasures have been used as decor for her home and garden and enhance its unique style. Mary smiles, 'I am very pleased with the way it has turned out'.

Jeans Curtains

by Danielle Elford, Annerley, Qld.

Last spring my mother-in-law came from Germany for a visit. In an attempt to get one of the sleep-outs ready for her, I cleaned out the junk, set up the futon and washed the curtains. The trouble was that the curtains came out of the washing machine in shreds. They were old purple and blue corduroy ones that my partner and I had sewn for his place as a joint project during our courting days. (A man who could sew – I was suitably impressed!) Since the room has full ceiling to waist windows down the whole east side (and a bare tin ceiling), this was not good. I had to think fast. I knew I could make curtains easily enough, but the material would be expensive.

Upon searching my material stash, I found the jeans collection. I had been passively collecting discarded jeans for years, planning to do some kind of denim patchwork in squares cut from old jeans and other clothing, but had yet to get that project off the ground. It occurred to me to use the jeans legs whole. Why not just cut the legs down the side and join them together? I soon realised I needed extra length and thought of using the shorts on the top. This led to the idea of threading curtain rings through the belt loops.

I managed to get the curtains up in one weekend, with a bit of household support from my partner and sister-in-law as I all but abandoned my other responsibilities for a day and a half. All told I used 32 jeans legs and eight jeans shorts. Early Sunday evening I found myself three legs short of the last curtain. A phone call to another sister-in-law found me three extra pairs of jeans I could pop over and collect. While 16 pairs of jeans might seem like a lot, it is surprising how many stray pairs of jeans there are out there. It's not as difficult as it might seem to amass such a collection.

The resulting curtains have a rustic thrown-together feel that suits the room. They are very heavy and really work to block out the morning sun.

HOW I DID IT

These curtains were extremely simple in design and very slap-together in method.

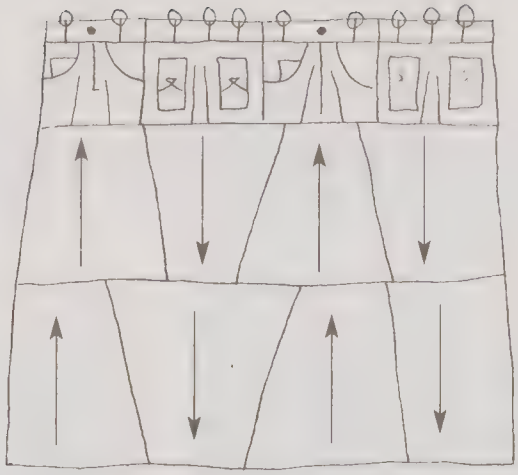
I used an overlocker from start to finish. This made the job a little easier as I didn't have to zigzag seams or hem edges. I left the hem and all the edges with an overlocked finish. The only time I found it necessary to use the sewing machine was for joining small sections of the shorts for the top strips where pockets and studs created too much bulk for the overlocker. I broke two needles and jammed the machine a couple of times before accepting this fact. Of course, the whole project could be done using a sewing machine.

Once I had opened out the shorts and pieced them together, I sewed darts

A cheap and cheery window covering; the jeans curtains look fabulous with the sun shining through from behind.

Tie-dyed jeans give a beautiful stained glass effect.

Curtain rings were threaded through the belt loops.



A rough diagram of the curtain layout.

where necessary to make the strip as symmetrical as possible (see grey lines on diagram).

For the leg strips I alternated the direction of the legs to even out the width of the fabric. The legs ranged in size depending on the size and style of the jeans. Legs that were very flared tended to be the same width at both ends when opened out. This interfered with the pattern a little, but it all balanced out in the end.

I alternated the colours as much as possible, by dividing the denims into light, medium and dark. On one panel of each curtain I used purple as a feature colour.

To join the three horizontal strips together I used a bed slat (any long straight edge will do) and a marker to straighten top and bottom edges of each strip. A fair bit of material was lost from both ends in this process.

While straightening the edges of the curtains I found it unnecessary to square them. The curtains tend to be wider at the bottom than at the top and they seem to hang better with this extra width, as the jeans legs on the bottom corners tend to want to curl around to revert to their original shape.

The character of the jeans adds to the finished project. Patches and trims look great and pockets can be functional as well as aesthetically pleasing. It has occurred to me that I'll have to watch out for wasps and spiders building nests up there though.

I got a pleasant surprise when I first hung the curtain with the purple tie-dyed leg in it. When the sunlight hits it from behind the result is a beautiful stained glass effect. It would definitely have been worth tie-dying the white denim had time permitted. The downside of this feature is that permanent stains, such as on knees, that might not be noticeable under normal lighting, may show up when light shines through the fabric, especially on the lighter coloured denim. Hold up to sunlight to test first.

As I used more legs than shorts, I was left with a fair-sized collection of cut-off jeans shorts. I planned to keep them to make more bags like the couple I made last year, but I ended up using them to replace the faded curtains in our Kombi. I did a last-minute no-sew job and hung them up as they were. I intended to cut and sew them later, but still haven't got back to that job.

KNITTING TIPS

• Worried your rug or cushion squares won't be the right size? Just make a cardboard template and measure it against your knitting as you go.

• A suede brush is fabulous for bringing up the nap and giving a brushed effect to knitting.

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Creating A Herbal Medicine Cupboard

by Jane Fairbrother, Marcoola, Qld.

Thinking of using herbs medicinally? Here are some basic methods you will find essential for putting together herbal home treatments. Herbs are strong medicine in their own right and all care should be taken to handle them hygienically throughout any processing. Make sure complaints are correctly diagnosed by a qualified practitioner and follow their advice regarding application and dosage. Extra care must be taken during pregnancy and infancy. Do not use essential oils on children under three years old without consulting with a practitioner.

INFUSION IN VEGETABLE OIL

Fill a clean wide-mouthed jar with your chosen fresh herb. The plant matter should be free of garden soil. Rinse it if necessary and ensure the herb is as dry as possible. Pour in a light vegetable oil such as sunflower to completely cover the plant matter. Seal the jar and place it on a warm sunny windowsill for a month, shaking and turning the jar daily.

After a month strain the oil through a muslin cloth. Squeeze every drop of oil out and ensure all plant matter is removed. Decant into a dark-coloured bottle. Seal, label and store away from sunlight.

INFUSION IN VINEGAR

Fill a clean wide-mouthed jar with your chosen fresh herb, ensuring the herb is as dry as possible. Pour in vinegar. I like to use organic red wine vinegar for cooking purposes or apple cider vinegar for general use. Completely cover the plant material. Seal the jar and place it in a dark cupboard for two full months, shaking each day.

After two months strain off the liquid into a clean dark jar. Seal, label and store in your pantry. Use after two weeks.

INFUSION IN SPRING WATER

Find a special teapot and reserve it for the purpose of making herbal infusions. Place 20 grams of dried herb or 30 grams of fresh in a warmed teapot. Pour 500 millilitres of boiling water over the herb. Put the lid on and allow the tea to steep for 10 minutes. Strain into a cup and add honey if desired.

TINCTURES

200 g dried herb

250 ml alcohol (at least 30 percent proof, vodka is suitable)

750 ml spring water

Finely chop the herb and place in a glass jar. Combine the liquids and pour in enough to cover the herb. Seal tightly and store in a warm dark place for one month, shaking the mixture twice a week.

After a month strain liquid into a clean dark-coloured bottle. Squeeze the herbs through a muslin cloth to extract all the liquid. Seal, label and store away from sunlight.

DRYING HERBS

Seek advice on when to harvest particular plants and their different parts; a good herbal reference book is useful here, or if you have knowledgeable staff at your local nursery ask them for advice. Climatic conditions vary significantly throughout Australia and so do harvesting times. In general, cut

leaves at any time in spring and flower heads late in the season. I harvest roots in the autumn when the upper parts of the plant have died back and all the nutrients are concentrated in the roots.

Leaves and branches can be spread on brown paper on a rack in a warm shady place. Don't let them overlap, and ensure air can circulate all around. Leave for one to three weeks, till the plant matter is dry but not flaky. Crush between hands and store in clean, dry, labelled jars.

When drying plants with tiny flower heads, tie them in bunches and hang upside down. Cover the flower head with a paper bag to ensure you catch all the delicate petals and secure with a rubber band around the stem.

BATH BAG

Use a large handkerchief, a square of muslin or calico, or a Chux cloth to create a small bag that you can tie a long ribbon to. Mix together equal parts of fresh herb, rolled oats and milk powder. (If using dried herb, halve the quantity.) Place in the bag, or just in the centre of the cloth square, and tie it up. Hang this under the water while running a bath. While you are soaking swish the bag around the water and rub it all over your body.

ESSENTIAL OILS

Essential oils are highly volatile substances extracted from various plant parts. An essential oil represents the 'blood' of a plant and its spirit or personality. Essential oils are not oily, they have a consistency between that of oil and water. They should never be used neat or ingested orally. The active constituents of essential oils are organic chemicals that, due to their fine molecular structure, are absorbed into the skin and carried around the body by the bloodstream. In complementary therapy essential oils are applied to the skin via massage or bath, and can be used as inhalations.

For adults add 1 drop of essential oil to 1 gram, or 1 millilitre, of carrier product before applying to the body. For example, use 10 millilitres of almond oil or 10 grams of aloe vera gel to 10 drops of essential oil. In the bath stir 4 – 6 drops of essential oil vigorously into the bath water.

For the fragile elderly and children less than 10 years old use 1 drop of essential oil to 2 millilitres of carrier. In the bath use 2 – 4 drops of essential oil dissolved in a tablespoon of milk and stir vigorously into the bath water.

OIL BURNERS

Fill the dish of the burner with hot water. Add 6 – 8 drops of essential oil. Light a tea light underneath.

INHALATION

Fill a bowl with 1 litre of near-boiling water. Add 4 drops of essential oil. Cover your head and the bowl with a large towel so that no steam escapes. Hold your head a comfortable distance away from the heat and breathe deeply and gently. Maintain this for 5 – 10 minutes and do come up for air if you need to. Afterwards, rest in a warm environment for 20 – 30 minutes to allow your lungs to adjust to the changes.

ROOM SPRAY

Put a teaspoon of vodka or methylated spirits into a 100-millilitre spray bottle. Add up to 20 drops of essential oil. Shake well. Fill the bottle with spring water, herbal infusion or floral water.

Keep this article handy; in future issues we will be publishing a series of articles about Jane's top five healing herbs. To use the advice in these articles you will need the basic knowledge given above.

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Beads, Beads, Beads

by Megg Miller, Nagambie, Vic.

Beads are booming at present and wherever you go you'll see shops or market stalls offering colourful and attractive jewellery. Where do the beads come from? Often they're factory made in humungous quantities from either glass or plastic. Just occasionally you will find handmade beads and these will be highly individual and unique looking. Queenslander Kylie Banks makes and sells glass beads in between sharing farm duties with hubby Paul and caring for two energetic little boys.

'It's an addictive hobby and once you start making beads you just want to keep going', Kylie said.

Paul, Kylie, Jack (5½) and Bill (2½) live on the family farm 'Duneira', near Blackall in western Queensland, with Paul's parents. The farm has been in the Banks family for 120 years and currently supports sheep and cattle operations. Blackall is a busy rural community of about 1500 people.

'Duneira is on the banks of the Barcoo River, and consists of approximately 38,000 acres of semi-open Mitchell grass plains interspersed with gidyea scrub and buffel grass pastures. We run Merino ewes and breed Merino lambs for wool production and sell the wether lambs to wool or meat producers. We also run a herd of Santa Gertrudis-Brahman cross cattle, producing feeder steers and heifers that we sell to southern Queensland feedlots', Paul said.

A busy farm doesn't sound the usual place for a craft studio or an enthusiastic craftsperson. Has it been easy for Kylie to find some hours for bead making while also looking after the boys and giving Paul a hand?

'It hasn't really been hard juggling things. I make beads when the time is there. The boys and Paul come first and I love the opportunity to go out and help on Duneira, so the beads are something I really like doing, but don't always have enough time to do. I still help tag cattle, draft sheep and do whatever else needs doing and love working outside. Jack is in grade one this year and I now drive to town every day, so we travel approximately 80 kilometres a day on the school run. As well, I work one day a week in town as the school-based health nurse, which I enjoy. Summers here are very hot, so I don't make a lot of beads; it's not very pleasant sweltering over a hot flame', Kylie said.

DISCOVERING BEAD MAKING

Kylie admits to a long-standing interest in arts and crafts and has dabbled in all sorts of mediums. She discovered bead making when the opportunity arose to attend a one-day workshop in Blackall, with Louise, a good friend.

'After the workshop, I didn't do much in the way of beads for a year or two until Jack went to kindy. Then Lou and I used to take her son Reilly and my Jack to kindy and go around to the local arts centre and bead the day away. Our youngest children, Bill and Ellen,

came with us and played together while we made beads. Having Lou there really worked well because once you start a bead you can't remove it from the flame and if one of the kids needed something there was a free adult to help. The beading days were great for catching up and working together helped us both develop our skills', said Kylie.

HOME-BASED BUSINESS

The idea of selling beads arose initially as a way to provide extra dollars for the girls to pay for the glass used in bead making. What they were doing was experimenting with different colours and designs and having a great deal of fun, but they weren't focused on developing a business. Then they attended a conference in Blackall with their work and sold heaps of beads and jewellery.

'There was a lot of interest in our work and we actually took orders. We were excited at this prospect and it encouraged us to try and make a hobby business out of our beads. Business cards were printed and orders taken and Hot Beads was up and running. Louise has since left Blackall, but I've continued here and she beads in Toowoomba', said Kylie.

'Paul is a good support. When I'm trying to make a lot of beads he will take the boys with him as much as he can. The workshop is a room in the shearers' quarters that I've taken over. I used to work in the house, but we live in a small workers' cottage and stuff was scattered everywhere. It's much easier now with a little space of my own. Sometimes Paul will take the boys out on the farm run and I'll duck over and make beads, or if there's an order or project I'm working on Paul's mum Annette will look after Billy and Jack. The kids call my work area the bead shop, they're great about it all and tell me everything looks good even when I know it's not. I'm lucky too in having good critics in Paul and Annette, who is a silversmith', said Kylie.

MAKING BEADS

Learning the ins and outs of a craft like glass bead making is easiest in a face-to-face workshop situation, though Kylie said there are numerous books

Kylie's unique handmade glass beads.

available with great tips in them and lots of magazines on beading, which boost inspiration when it's flagging.

'I get my glass from a supplier in Sydney, but getting materials isn't the biggest problem, it's having to compete with the commercially made glass and plastic beads that are factory manufactured. If people don't know my beads are handmade they don't appreciate them or the work that has gone into making them', said Kylie.

To make glass beads, Kylie uses a hot head torch run by bottled gas. She also uses stainless steel mandrels (or rods), flux (bead release) to stop glass sticking to the mandrel, glass rods, and cork-like vermiculite, used to put beads in to cool. With the glass rods, she mainly uses bull's eye glass, though there are other types available. Kylie says that when selecting glass people should be aware that not all glass is compatible. Check this out before starting or it will explode.

The process of actually making beads is simple, but of course requires skill on the maker's part. The glass rod is heated over a flame. Rolling it in the fingers as it heats helps disperse the heat evenly. Once the glass reaches a molten state the mandrel is heated. Then the glass is wound onto the mandrel in a push-pull type of movement, keeping the glass (and mandrel) in the flame and turning all the time. Specialised tools, paddles and pokers are used to shape the bead into a square, oval or any shape desired. At this stage colours can be added, patterns made or silver foil added. Once the design of the bead is completed it must be cooled uniformly. The vermiculite is utilised here. The bead on the mandrel is placed in vermiculite and left there until it is cool. The glass needs to cool slowly and uniformly; if it's rushed it can crack or even explode.

'Practice, practice and more practice, that's all you need', Kylie said. She also pointed out that one of the trickiest things to get used to is how far into the flame to hold the glass. If it's too low or too hot in the flame, the glass burns and the bead turns out smoky and burnt looking.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Despite the fact Kylie has 101 activities going on between the farm, Jack's school, Billy's kinder and her work as the school-based health nurse, she is enthusiastic about the different paths she can take in learning more about bead making. 'I'd like to continue to create different types of beads and keep on experimenting with colour, because there's always lots to learn. I'd also like to try my hand at hollow beads, as well as adding complexity to those I make. But if things get too busy I'll just make them for pleasure and sell them at the local arts shop in Blackall, which supports rural craftspeople and their work. It will be exciting regardless of which direction I go', Kylie said happily.

To contact Kylie Banks ph: 07-4657-6159, or write to 'Duneira', Blackall 4472. Photos courtesy *Queensland Country Life*.

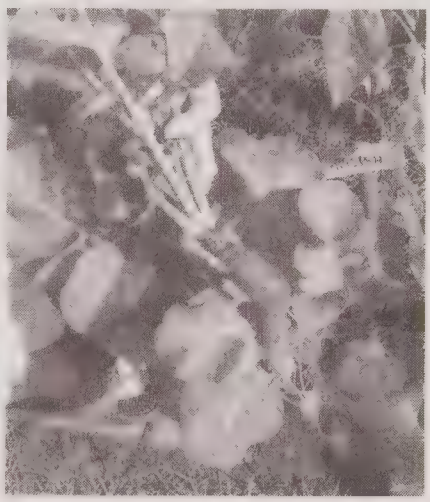
SPRAY AND WIPE

Homemade spray and wipe can be made from two tablespoons of cloudy ammonia, half a cup of white vinegar, two tablespoons of washing up liquid and four litres of warm water. Store in well-labelled spray bottles and use on walls, benches, white goods etc.

In Praise Of The Radish

by Jose Robinson, Noosaville, Qld.

Radish is a fast-growing crisp and peppery ingredient for summer salads and is very easy to grow in the home garden. I don't think there are many other seeds that come up so quickly after planting, and I can't think of anything else that can be ready to eat in around three weeks. Usually, after sowing radish seed in your prepared vegetable patch, two minuscule green leaves appear after two or three days. What could be faster than that to germinate? Radish's speedy germination makes it an excellent crop to introduce young children to the wonders of nature, even if they are not too keen on the taste. The quick-growing red radish is often used in the garden as a marker, planted on the ends of rows of slower growing vegies such as carrots.



Watering is important for young radishes to maintain a sweet flavour and crisp texture. If they get too old, they become tough and I then cut them up and add them to my worm farm.

Japanese gardeners introduced us to the long white radish called daikon, which has become very popular in Australia in the past decade. These can grow to giants and have been known to reach 20 kilograms under ideal conditions. The normal size, however, is more like 20 centimetres or so in length. They do take longer to grow than the little red radish, but are much more versatile. They like deep friable soil with no lumps. Any lumpy soil will cause the root to distort.

All varieties may be sown from spring through to autumn. However, if you live in the warmer areas of Queensland, as I do, they can be planted just about all year around. There are always radishes growing in my vegie garden.

Young radish leaves may be used chopped up finely in salads, however, the root or bulb is the part most commonly eaten. While red radishes are usually eaten raw in salads they can be added to soups and stir-fries and even pickled. The white daikon radish is frequently used in Asian stir-fries.

Even the seed pods after the plant is spent may be used while they're still young and tender; they're like a spicy version of snow peas in salads and stir-fries. In India a variety called rat's tail radish is grown just for its very long pods, which sometimes reach 60 centimetres in length.

Think beyond the salad bowl and make radishes an essential ingredient in your vegie garden.

TO SAVE SEED POTATOES

Wait until the tops have completely died back and are brown and crispy. Do this before the first major frost or, if you are planning to leave your potatoes in the ground over winter, mulch deeply with straw or other mulch. Frosted potatoes taste terrible and are not suitable for seed.

Dig potatoes out carefully as any speared potatoes will have to be eaten. Let your seed potatoes dry for a day in a shady, airy place. Select the best specimens. Choose ones that are scab free and have intact skins, and go for a variety of sizes for the best variation in next year's crop. Green potatoes aren't good eating, but can be saved for planting.

Store in onion or orange mesh bags, hessian, cardboard boxes or newspaper so they can breathe. Keep potatoes in a cool, dark airy spot until planting in September. Check them regularly in case one has gone off or they are sprouting.

Before planting in spring, and at the first sign of sprouting, chit the potatoes by putting them out in the sun to green up for a few days. This will encourage strong shoots. If the potato has fully sprouted into a mass of tendrils in the cupboard, toss it – it has fully used up its stored goodness for growing into a healthy plant and is no longer useful as a seed potato.

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Do A Number On Your Garden

by Miles Trench, Minlaton, SA.

Ever stop to think how many numbers we use each day? Numbers for money, numbers for dates and numbers for shopping – even the weather is described by numbers. Numbers are extraordinary in other ways too. Did you know that nature has its own special set of numbers that affect each and every aspect of our lives? They are influential, they are real and they are in fact simply 1 through to 9.

According to the ancient precepts of feng shui, prosperity and balance can be attained by using these basic numbers to direct the correct placement of plants and natural materials in and around our homes.

Each of the main compass directions has its own special number. By referring to these numbers in planting and in landscape and interior design, we are able to access those powerful forces that ultimately control and sustain all ecosystems and natural environments.

1 NUMBER ONE

One is the number of the north. According to feng shui master, Lillian Too, this is the water path and is the direction that generates career luck. Hence, it would be beneficial to place a small pond outside in this area, or perhaps an aquarium in a north-facing room of your dwelling. This will energise the water aspect and help to bring about increased career fortune.

2 NUMBER TWO

Two is for the south-west, the relationship sector. This controls such things as marriage, love and partnerships. It would be beneficial to place two hanging crystals in the south-west corner of your house. Perhaps outside in the garden, plant two beds of red peonies. These flowers are said to help 'attract very good husbands' and can 'jazz up one's love life', according to Too.

3 NUMBER THREE

Three is the number of the east and is represented by the element wood. The east brings good health. A suggestion here would be to plant three shrubs or small trees together in the eastern section of your garden to encourage prosperity and good health. Inside, the auspicious green dragon symbol could be used on an eastern wall of your home. Of course, three dragons would be even better; or perhaps a green 'wealth tree', made using semi-precious stones like citrine, can be placed to energise the eastern corner of a room.

4 NUMBER FOUR

Four is for the south-east. This is also a wood sector and represents income or earnings. Planting four column-like trees in the south-east, poplars or pencil pines for example, would encourage activity in this area and stimulate money luck. In her recent book, Gill Hale asserts that four is also the magic number of wind and of late spring. Planting a block of four appropriately shaped trees in the south-east during late spring would seem to be an especially auspicious undertaking.

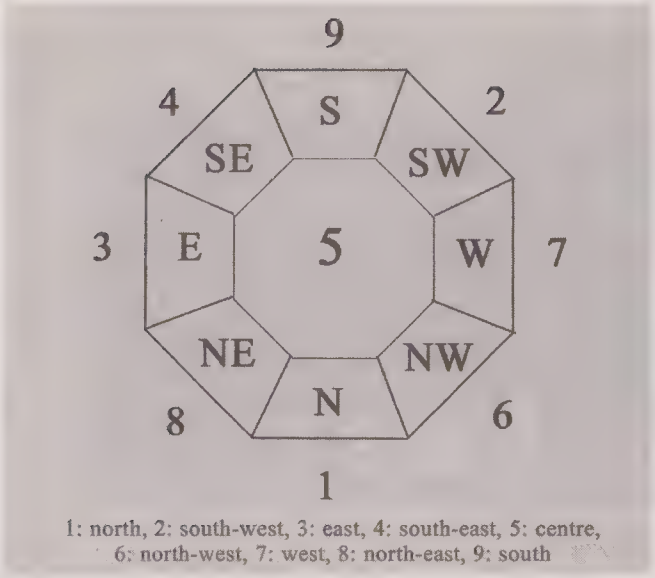
5 NUMBER FIVE

The number five is allocated for the central position. It occupies the very middle of the feng shui compass and is seen as a stabilising earth energy. Five is an assertive number; it supplies solidity and acts as a solid base for the surrounding energies. Stone or marble placed in the centre of one's home or the main dining area would be an ideal way to ensure stability and peace.

6 NUMBER SIX

Mentors, patriarchs, heaven and gold symbolise the energy of the north-west, represented by the number six. Because the north-west is a metal sector, coins or ingots or golden coloured wind chimes (with six bars), will encourage the accumulation of wealth. Especially symbolic are Chinese coins with holes in the centre. Tie together a string of six of these coins using a red ribbon and place them in the north-west corner of your home. In the garden, growing six money plants (*Crassula ovata*) in the north-west corner will promote prosperity and good fortune.

The radiant yellow colour and circular shape (representing earth energy) of the seven sunflowers planted here enliven and nourish the metal sector of the west.



1: north, 2: south-west, 3: east, 4: south-east, 5: centre, 6: north-west, 7: west, 8: north-east, 9: south

The feng shui compass number chart will help design a most beneficial garden.

A circle-shaped rainwater tank is auspiciously placed in the north-east (earth sector) part of the block and used to grow potatoes.

7 NUMBER SEVEN

Seven is for autumn. It represents the west, which is also a metal sector. Its colours are white or metallic (copper, gold, silver and bronze). Seven white-flowered shrubs planted in the western section of your garden will help protect family luck. Inside, a metal vase with fragrant jasmine shoots placed on a table in the western section of a room will generate increased family providence.

8 NUMBER EIGHT

The north-east is represented by the number eight. This is an earth sector and its colours are yellow or ochre. The representative shape of this direction is round or circular. The number eight is especially auspicious in Chinese tradition; it represents prosperity and good fortune. Having many eights in your phone number or address is seen as a very lucky sign. Crystals are of especial benefit here because they come from the earth and help channel chi (natural beneficial energies) into the room. This area also represents education luck. Lillian Too states: 'Crystals are the best and most powerful manifestation of earth energy'. Placing a crystal globe on the north-eastern part of your desk will help concentration and study focus.

9 NUMBER NINE

Nine is the number for the south and its colour is red. The south brings recognition and is represented by the element of fire. It is beneficial to plant red flowering trees or shrubs in the south of your garden. This wood element feeds the fire energy of the south. Nine *Templetonia retusa* bushes, planted in a triangle shaped bed with their springtime crimson flowers ablaze, would bring fame and fortune to those who seek to acquire them.

TRY IT AT HOME

Hocus-pocus? Fairy tales? Don't believe a word? Well, why don't you give it a try? Surely the ancient Chinese must have been onto something to believe in feng shui and its ideas for all these millennia. Perhaps living by the numbers can be of benefit after all. If nothing else, sometimes it's good to try a new way of thinking before our time is gone and we at last realise that our number is up.

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Rain at Last

by Nan Lloyd, Darkan, WA.

Most of us love the warm sunny days, but when we are waiting for the weather to break (whatever time of year that is for you) long-awaited rain is a blessing indeed. Of course, we don't want it to rain too heavily at once or it washes the soil away. And we don't want it to get too cold too quickly or the grass won't grow. Not that we are whinging cockies or anything.

In some years, when the break of the season comes late and each day dawns sunny and clear, it's difficult to tolerate the television weather forecasters. They come on with a big smile, saying, '. . . and it's another beautiful warm sunny day . . .', while people on the land sit there frowning, threatening to throw a brick through the screen.

When the rain finally comes it's wonderful to see the dry dusty soil turn green practically overnight. Not the least cause for joy is that now I can dust and clean the house without every surface immediately becoming re-covered in fine sediment.

The chooks are happy too and don't mob me when I walk out of the vegie garden with an armload of greens for them. Things were so dry last year that I had to sacrifice some of my cabbages and all of the broccoli leaves for them. The broccoli heads still produced reasonably well, even if the plants looked a little bald and peculiar.

The sheep no longer chase every vehicle that goes past their paddock in the hope of being fed and the hoggets (one-year-old sheep) are playful again, leaping and chasing one another up and down the dam banks.

Hubby greases up the tractor, getting ready to put in this year's crop, and is all smiles as he looks at the clover leaping out of the ground. It's an excellent start to the season for us, though not as good for others further east.

I love the cooler days and nights that bring more and better sleep for all of us. Once it rains I can get outside and get things done without frying in the sun or having to get up too early to beat the heat.

Last year it was so dry we nearly emptied the rainwater tank, so were on rations for a month or so prior to the rain. This meant very small baths for Miss Five, short showers for us, and recycling all the washing machine water to re-use or to water the dying lawn. Fortunately, the water we use on the vegie garden is dam water and that managed to hold out till the rain so I could keep the vegies going. The dam also waters the chooks.

Before last year's break the last previous rainfall was in January and summer downpours always result in a lot of runoff into the dams, and when it is really dry a lot of other goodies run into the dam too. This includes sheep poo and all manner of other detritus, which makes the water nasty smelling and black. The chooks didn't seem to mind, nor did the vegies, but unfortunately this water also fills the toilet so we had to put up with the smell all summer. We got used to it, but visitors must have thought our septic had backed up or something equally as horrible.

The first heavy rain also creates a lot of runoff as there is no grass to slow the water down. I usually don my Drizabone and head out into the rain with my shovel as soon as the water

starts to head in all the wrong directions. Hubby's workshop is above the chook pen on a hill, so all the runoff from its roof races down the hill and straight through the middle of the chook shed. I dig channels across the front of the chook pen and past the vegies so the runoff heads straight down the paddock. Actually, I enjoy it. It's like being a kid again and playing in the water, watching it swirl in a different direction and create a bit of a tidal wave as I unblock previous drains that have become filled in. Hubby usually watches from the warmth and shelter of the house, probably not realising how much I enjoy this job – it's a bonus buzz on top of the joy and relief once the season has broken.

We don't do a lot of cropping compared to some of our neighbours, but still put in some oats, which we harvest and store to feed our sheep on in the dry summer and autumn months. Putting in the crop entails a lot of driving around in circles as the green paddocks turn into rich brown soil behind the tractor. This is when the two-way radio gets a lot of use: Can you bring me out my lunch, tea, smoko, or whatever? Can you call the stock agent and order such and such? Can you ring around and see if you can get a part for this or that? Woe betide you if you are out of the house when a call comes through. You simply have to be there to tend to these important messages. Thank goodness it's only for a short time of the year.

With a bit of luck, we might get some mushrooms. Sometimes we get a number of lovely feeds, but sometimes we get none at all if the rain comes too late and it is too cold. Many farms never have mushrooms now, perhaps because of the amount of chemicals that are sprayed onto the paddocks these days as well as the heavy cropping regime. It's a shame to think that some children will never experience the joy of picking mushrooms as we did when we were younger.

Farming life has certainly changed over the years. For many the changes are good, for some perhaps not so good. But one thing that will never change is the joy felt when the season breaks and that longed-for rain arrives at last.

Old-Fashioned Pie Melon Jam

by Lorraine Zinnack, Kingscote, SA.

It's jam and preserve making time again. When I was a child most of my parents' friends had at least one fruit tree in their backyard with ripe fruit dropping to the ground for us children to help ourselves to. On many a sweltering hot day Mum and I would be in our pinnies (aprons) busying ourselves in the kitchen cutting up fruit and stirring the bubbling jam in the stew-pot. I was allowed to write up the labels and date them, then Mum would proudly stack the shelves of her store cupboard with the various jams, colour-coordinating them if she had the space.

Pie or jam melon is a very versatile fruit if you don't have fruit trees. When cooked, the melons turn a translucent gold and their mild flavour makes them a suitable base for many other jams. Try melon with orange, lemon or grapefruit to make marmalade. Augment a limited fruit supply by adding dried or fresh apricot to pie melon for a tasty apricot flavoured jam, or use fresh berries or a tin of berry jam to make melon and berry jam.

Melon and pineapple is one of my favourites. Make the jam by peeling, deseeding and dicing the melon into 1 cm cubes. Weigh it, sprinkle with sugar and leave overnight for the juice to be produced. Next day, add whatever other (weighed) fruit you have decided to use in combination with it, adding a couple of tablespoons of lemon juice to aid setting. Bring the mixture to the boil. When the fruit is soft, add sugar, allowing three-quarters by weight of sugar to the weight of fruits. Test the jam frequently by placing a teaspoon of jam onto a cold jar lid in the freezer or fridge. When the cold jam on the lid forms a wrinkled skin when pushed lightly with your finger, setting point has been reached and it's time to bottle your jam in hot jars, sealing them immediately.

MELON AND DRIED APRICOT JAM

This one uses an equal weight of sugar and fruit.

500 g dried apricots
2.5 kg sugar
2 kg pie melon in 1 cm cubes
juice and grated rind of 1 lemon

The day before making the jam cover dried apricots with boiling water and leave overnight. Sprinkle 1 kg of the sugar over the pie melon and leave overnight.

Next day, chop the apricots roughly, add to the melon with juice and grated lemon rind. Boil until soft and clear. Add 1.5 kg sugar and boil until setting point is reached. Ladle into sterilised hot jars, seal and label.

Look up GR 162 for more jam melon recipes.

Palm Frond Craft

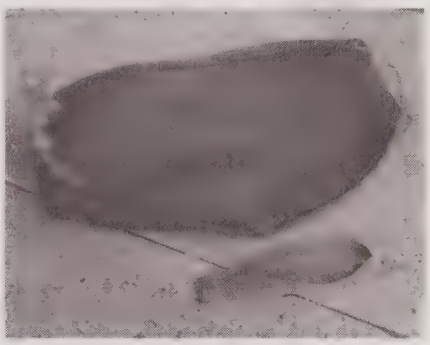
by Narelle Renn, Coochiemudlo Island, Qld.

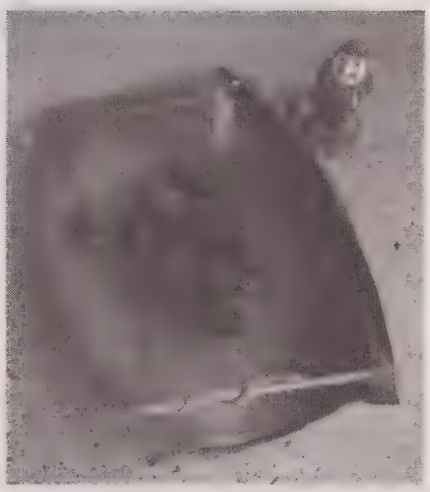
When I moved to my island home I was amazed at the number of overflowing trailers, bulging car boots and utes all piled high with palm fronds, on their way to the waste transfer station.

There were five palms already growing in my new garden, so it wasn't long before I too had fallen fronds to contend with. As I gathered them up I was struck by the range of colours in the fallen fronds, from deep mahogany to the palest creamy gold and every imaginable shade in between. I'm a recycler from way back and was excited to discover this new resource. How could I use them? What could I make?

Because some of the fronds already looked vaguely like containers, I decided to extend that and began experimenting. Most fronds have a large bottom section that has been wrapped round the tree trunk, extending to the recognisable palm-frondy end. I used my garden loppers to cut off the long frondy bit and was left with an interesting piece of material to be creative with. I've found bangalow, Alexandra and some golden cane palms to be the best to work with.

The newer softer fronds are easier to shape as the old dry fronds tend to crack or split, but they often have the most beautiful colours. I soaked them overnight in the bath and they became easier to shape, but it was a messy business trailing through the house with dripping fronds, so I searched for and found an old bath at the recycle centre and use that.





Here are a few examples of containers that Narelle made using the palm fronds found in her garden. The artistic shapes were inspired by the fronds themselves, but the containers won't hold heavy items.

I experimented with different methods of fastening the sides of the containers. I really fancied stitching them together, but found it impossible to hold the shapes as I wanted them and stitch at the same time. I needed an instant fastener till the containers dried. I tried brass paper clips, the type that is pushed through a hole then opened out and folded back (from office suppliers) and found they worked well.

The first containers looked great, but as they dried they shrank and crinkled and were useless. I stuffed the next ones tightly with scrunched up newspaper and left them to dry. They held their shape so well and looked so good I decided not to stitch them, but retained the brass fasteners instead.

My containers are decorative and not meant for carrying loads, but possibly could with stitched joins. Some are hanging containers to hold light objects like mail and cooking utensils. I use spray varnish for the finish, natural string for hanging containers and beads or found objects for decoration.

I must confess I have become a bit obsessed with palm fronds and am always on the lookout as I take my daily walk round the island. I now have a stall at the local market. People there often tell me they have been trying for years to think of what to do with their fallen palm fronds.

'Be creative!' I tell them. 'Make containers.'

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Weeds For The Butterflies

by Colline Muir, Hawthorn East, Vic.

The Australian annual nettle weed, *Urtica incisa*, has a multitude of uses for humans, but other creatures too appreciate the nutritious, gastronomic and protective virtues of nettles. The caterpillars of certain *Vanessa* butterflies live exclusively on them, avoiding being pierced by those tiny hypodermic needles with bulbs full of formic acid. In Australia *Vanessa itea,* the Australian admiral, lived on the native nettle, until the introduction and spread of the European species enabled the butterfly to extend its range and increase in abundance. It is still seen occasionally in the suburbs, although not in the large numbers that once enhanced our gardens.

Eggs of the Australian admiral are laid singly or in pairs on the undersides of the nettle leaves. They are pale green, vertically ribbed, slightly higher than wide, and flattened on top. The young larvae, with a strong sense of self-protection, rely not only on the nettle stings to deter would-be predators, but build communal tents for themselves by drawing together the edges of a leaf and securing them with silk thread. As the caterpillars outgrow the tent, they sleep in the open, but hidden from view, feeding at night. Their bodies may be brown or yellowish green, with stripes along their sides. Like other members of the family Nymphalidae, they have a number of small branched spines along their backs. When the caterpillars are fully grown, they may move away from the food plant and hang themselves up by their tails, attached to little pads of silk that they weave.

The pupae are generally mottled violet-grey, but the colour may be influenced by the colour of their surroundings; a very useful example of protective colouration. According to W J Rainbow, author of *A Guide To The Study Of Australian Butterflies*, 'sometimes these pupae are entirely of a brilliant burnished golden lustre, or simply adorned with golden spots and markings. Such are, however . . . invariably parasitised by ichneumon [wasps]'. It is a common disappointment, after the excitement of watching a caterpillar grow and pupate, to find it has been attacked by either wasps or fungus. In the first case, the pupa becomes an empty shell with a small round hole in it where the minute adult wasps have escaped after their grubs have eaten out the pupa from the inside. If a fungus is present, the pupa turns brown and misshapen.

The adult butterfly is mostly mottled in shades of warm brown, with darker wing tips and yellow patches and spots on upper and lower surfaces on the wings, with a blue circle on the under side of the lower wings. The eyes are densely hairy. Like other members of the subfamily Nymphalinae, the admirals are sun-loving, often resting head down with wings open. They are fond of drinking fermenting sap oozing from trees and may be run in for inebriation.

Another common member of the family Nymphalidae is *Vanessa kershawi,* the Australian or blue-spotted painted lady. This butterfly is often seen flying rapidly in short bursts, darting about close to the ground, landing briefly on some flowering vegetation to drink nectar. The painted lady is prettily marked underneath in patterns of orange, brown, white, yellow and black. On top, the wings are orange with black markings and some white spots near the tips.

Nowadays, the main food plant for the caterpillars is capeweed, of which there is no shortage. Originally, their taste was for native daisies such as everlastings, now in shorter supply. They also feed from artemisia (wormwood), Scotch thistle and cudweed. The caterpillars are rather similar to those of *V. itea.* They feed at night, so are not easily seen. The pupae are a little smaller and ornamented with spots of burnished gold. After all, the name chrysalis is Greek for 'the gold coloured sheath of butterflies'.

The English painted lady, *Vanessa cardui,* closely resembles our *V. kershawi* and, like most butterflies, loves to feed on buddleias.

Back to the nettles. You may often see leaves rolled or bent and secured with silk into neat dwellings occupied by small, pale spiders. Whether they make their own, which seems likely, or whether they use abandoned caterpillar tents, I know not, but in any case they are well protected. But what insects, I wonder, are game, or foolish, enough to brave the nettle stings to become spider food?

When, late in the nettle season, your nettles start to look bedraggled and rather short of leaves, rejoice, for your garden may soon be enhanced by the charming presence of Australian admiral butterflies.

From an article in *The Herb Age*, March 2005, the newsletter of the Herb Society Of Victoria. Contact the society at, HSOV, PO Box 396, Camberwell 3124 for more details.

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Have Tools, Will Travel

by Anne Wilkinson, Tully, Qld.

Anne and Lawrie were wracking their brains to find a way Anne's mother could easily move between their house and garden. Then they had some very handy visitors . . .

My mother is 94 and needs a walker to help her get around after suffering a broken hip. When she came to live with us we were faced with a problem. Mother loves wandering in the garden, but both the front and the back doors of our old Queenslander had steps leading up to them. The flights were short, being only four steps each, but the steps were deep, awkward and potentially slippery and she couldn't negotiate them without assistance. Like so many elderly people, Mother is independent and doesn't like to keep asking for help, so unless we offered she tended to stay indoors. This worried us as we knew the rambling garden was as much an adventure for her as it was for us. The obvious answer was to provide her with a ramp.

Having just signed away our financial lives buying the house in deep, tropical bush in north Queensland, we investigated ways of obtaining help. The most promising was a scheme available through Queensland Blue Care by which a tradesperson they contracted would build the ramp and we would pay for materials and half the labour cost. Blue Care was most helpful, but the problem was a delay in Federal Government funding.

Then friends from our previous home town came to stay. Jon and his wife Lorrae, with their son Scott and daughter-in-law Tracey, took Mother's problem to heart. On the farm they had sold to start travelling Australia, Jon had built a huge shed and their house. A ramp, he said, by comparison, would be 'a piece of cake', he'd love to keep his hand in, and murmured something like 'have challenge, will build'. Mother was delighted.

Despite the fact it was high summer, which here in the tropics means heat, plenty of rain and often swarms of hungry mosquitoes, measurements were made and a rough sketch drawn up.

Because safety regulations stipulated a slope of at least a 1 in 10, our ramp needed to run for over six metres. Jon decided it should then lead to a concrete pad to allow dry access to vehicles. The entire edifice would be more than 10 metres long.

Finding suitable and affordable timber was a problem. Prepared wood is extremely expensive, so shopping around was vital. Because of the area's heavy rainfall and high humidity, the timber for the ramp needed to be virtually knot free – not always easy to find – and sturdy, a heavier cut than is often supplied.

But luck must happen sometimes. By asking around the locals we ran to earth some suitable lengths of blue gum from a paddock cleared some years ago for sugar cane. The wood was still out on the farm, stored in racks under cover, air-dried and rough-sawn. It had been milled by the farmers' father to imperial measure and as such had been

Top: Anne's mother unveils a plaque celebrating her new freedom, to the delight of designers and builders Jon and Scott.

rejected by contemporary carpenters, so we got it at a good price. For our purpose it was perfect, well-hardened and satisfyingly full of character.

Jon, an archetypical bush carpenter and perfectionist, Scott and my husband Lawrie set to work in the carport, liberally surrounded by smoking mosquito coils. The framework was soon finished, cut and sunk in concrete. Each piece was detailed by hand-saw and chisel. In fact, only one power tool, an electric drill to drive in bolts and screws, was used in the whole construction, and not a single nail was used.

As Jon put it: 'Have tools, will travel. I love working with wood'.

The ramp took three weeks to build, during which only seven days were free of rain. When it was finished the whole construction glowed as a superb piece of craftsmanship and is now often admired. It complements our old house and is perfect for leaning over and admiring the views as well as making it easy and safe for Mother to go out whenever she wants.

In all it took about 100 lineal metres of framing timber, with 80 metres of hardwood decking, some 500 screws and 50 bolts, and of course concrete. The wood was sanded smooth before being waterproofed and we had a plaque made, which Mother unveiled in a quite emotional opening ceremony.

For us, our ramp is the 'friendship bridge', and we will always be grateful for the friends who made it possible so quickly. They are now in Western Australia where Jon plans to build a house for himself and Lorrae. Travelling with tools seems a great way to give gifts of beauty to the countryside.

The ramp, made of bush timber, is more than 10 metres long and contains not one nail.

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Make A Rainwater Filter

by Neville Jackson, Valhalla.

No-one wants to be ingesting foreign bodies in their drinking water. Here's a really cheap way to put together a filter for your tank. You might even taste the difference.

It's essential for rural and health-aware folks that the rainwater that falls on their roofs is always filtered, not just to remove the little indiscretions of our furry and feathered friends, but very likely pollutants in the roof dust. 'No pollution here mate!' I hear you say. But air pollution exists globally in many forms. Dioxins, PCBs, DDT and radioactive fallout have been found in the most pristine seeming environments.

Our roof could be considered by most to be 'pure as the trodden snow' for 'Shangri la' has never had any history of chemical usage. However, we filter all our tank water at least twice and always three times for drinking. First there is the tank screen that removes leaves and wind-blown debris, then the in-line filter described here, and finally an activated-carbon filter jug.

To maintain a clean roof no plastic, coloured catalogues or other pollutants should ever be burnt in household fires. These deposit all kinds of noxious chemical residues on a roof and there's always ash and creosote from nearby wood fires. So unfiltered roof water can be a very nasty drop.

We carry our own water when off the property and avoid any unfiltered water, be it roof derived or reticulated town water. This so-called drinking water at times contains high loads of added chemicals such as chlorine, fluorine and sometimes alum, which are all poisonous at certain levels and should always be avoided.

There are plenty of rainwater filters available for a price. Some are simple enough, others more complicated with moving parts. The main problem with moving parts is they sometimes don't and you lose the best rain for donkey's ages. Expensive and complicated devices are generally designed for suburban residences, not country regions where roof debris is more common.

The complicated devices have a high failure rate from blockages. In addition, some only allow low volumes of water to pass through the filter and that sudden storm means precious water overflows and goes to waste.

The filter described here is one I have experimented with, it's very simple, having no moving parts, and is possibly the cheapest. The maximum cost is about $50, but mine cost $13. Some of the materials might be found as off-cuts, thrown away by your friendly local plumber.

SOURCING SUPPLIES

When sourcing your supplies, either new or second-hand, you need to know a few essential measurements.

Measure the dimensions of the outlet on the gutter. Is it round or square? Mine has a square gutter outlet with a round converter. I prefer to use round, as square fittings and tubing are more expensive. Square also could have more chance of a blockage.

You need to know the distance from the gutter outlet to the primary filter screen on the water tank. This screen is the one that prevents ingress of leaves and Frisbees and stops 'Here Puss' from falling into the tank.

Measure the drop from the existing T-junction to the bottom cap, to give a convenient length to empty and clean. I saw a filter assemblage once that had a drop tube down to the ground and a spigot to drain. Trouble was the tube had to be shortened later so leaf blockage could be removed.

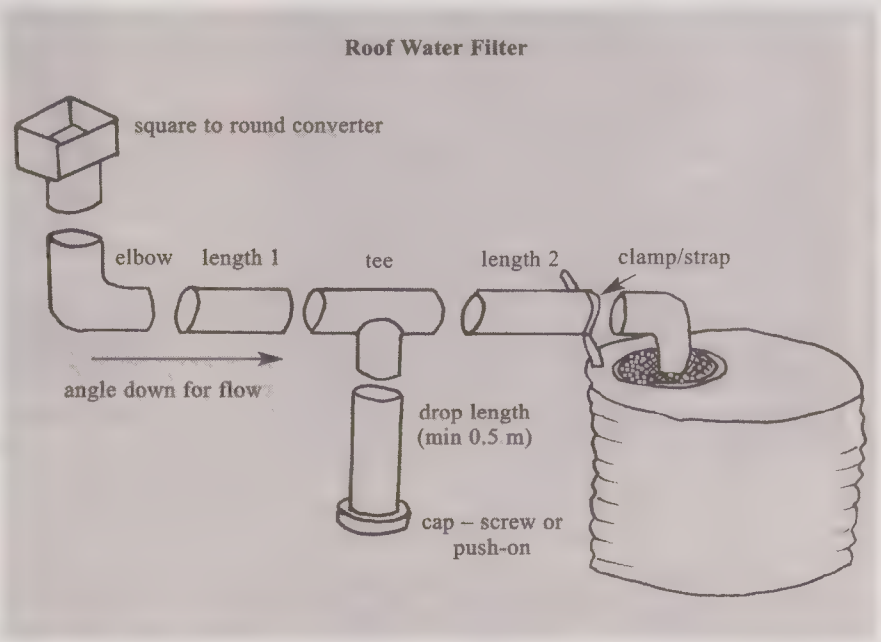

Diagram of the working filter and its parts. A square-to-round converter is not required if the gutter outlet is already round. Cut length 1 last. The second elbow is not required if length 2 is cut with a slope underneath.

SHOPPING LIST

Costs are approximate.

- 1 round or square converter, if required: $3
- 1 T-piece: $4
- 1 access coupling (only required for screw-on cap): $3
- 1 cap, a screw-on is easier but dearer, at $5, than a push-on: $4
- 1 or 2 elbows (1 elbow only if piping is cut on a slope as in diagram): $2.20
- small box of self-tapper screws, 6 gauge x 20 mm: $4
- strap of galvanised iron, 25 x 300 mm (can be made from scrap)
- length of stormwater-rated piping for distance measured plus at least 0.5 m for drop: $26 per 6 m length

Do not buy pressure or sewerage piping; these should be avoided because of greater cost for no gain.

All these fittings are 90 millimetre PVC. Push-on fittings are generally better than glued joints in case you want to make future changes. If a screw-on cap is not available, drill in three self-tapper screws near the bottom of the drop length and secure the push-on cap this way. Tools required are a hacksaw or old handsaw, drill and bits, screwdriver (or drill driver).

CONSTRUCTION

Affix gutter outlet converter (if required) with three equally spaced self-tappers, cut and screw in lengths and T-piece so that it and the drop will hang in their correct siting – next to the tank is usually convenient. Leave second length long enough for a slope-cut over tank screen, otherwise use a second elbow to direct flow onto screen. Affix second length with galvanised strap to top edge of tank (see diagram).

The drop should also be fastened with three self-tappers for security as water weighs a kilo per litre. Ensure the whole assemblage is secure. Ours occasionally had to sustain the weight of a possum or two for their full-moon romp on the roof, so a brace to strengthen it might be prudent.

OPERATION

To empty and clean the filter, have an old bucket handy to catch the muddy water and leaf debris. Remove self-tappers or screw-on cap. Give dirty water to a suitably grateful plant so as to not waste all that liquid fertiliser. Hose out any remaining dirt and re-fix the cap ready for the next rain. We find that this drop filter only needs to be emptied every month or so. Later I drilled a small hole in the cap base. This slowly emptied the tube, but did not affect the flow on of water into the rainwater tank.

HOW IT WORKS

Rainwater with contained solids runs from roof to gutter and into the drop piece that soon fills. Any dust and debris sinks to the bottom and is retained. Clean water continues on across to the tank screen.

We find this filter quite adequate; it removes all dirt and stray leaves and is easy to clean out. Rainwater piped into the house is passed through a charcoal filter jug before use. We believe in being fussy with water.

Earlier I mentioned benefits. These are not just for cleaner, safer water, but if you have coloured, powder-coated roofing iron and a galvanised water tank there is the real danger that the tank will rust out very quickly. This is caused by a corrosive reaction between the two dissimilar metals (roof and tank), especially when wet. The PVC filter assemblage breaks this metal-to-metal contact and prevents such corrosion of the tank.

Filter Hose Water

It's good practice to filter hose water in the garden. It's not that plants mind organic-derived debris, but drippers, soaker hoses and even sprinklers can easily become blocked. An inline filter is easy to fit and cheap, costing only several dollars at any discount store. When water pressure drops, unscrew cap from barrel and rinse off the internal plastic screen.

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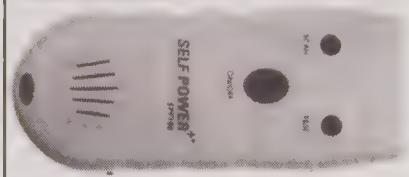

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A Vegetarian Dog Tale

by Val Smetheram, Wishart, Qld.

Vegetarian dogs? Yes, our much-loved canine member of the household was a vegetarian all her life. At nearly 15 years old she conceded a little to age and happily wore the padded coat I made for the last winter of her life. Despite numerous dire predictions from well-meaning friends and neighbours, she managed to keep in very good health. Apart from the usual booster vaccines, she only needed veterinary attention twice, which speaks for itself.

We are a 'vego' household, so when this tiny golden bundle joined us it was easy to treat her as one of the family, and that included diet. I simply fed her as I would a human baby. She thrived on mashed vegetables, a little milk, a little egg, small pieces of soft fruit, then small amounts of various types of grains, and finally a little protein. (I never fed her chocolate or onion as I'd read they were dangerous for dogs.) I soon discovered the dog was a whole lot easier to feed than our two boys.

Of course, she had her special likes. For example, in one place where we lived the next door neighbour had a small apple tree, which had a couple of low-lying branches heavy with fruit. After discovering the pleasure of a crunchy apple, she crept through the fence and helped herself. Fortunately, the neighbour was amused by her antics, especially as she ate the whole apple each time. She waited eagerly each weekday for our boys and their father to come home from work and school in order to beg for the apple cores from their lunch boxes. She also ate lemons off our own tree, they were a very soft-skinned lemon and she seemed to like the peel rather than the fruit.

Most fruit was eagerly accepted. I recall taking her to the pick-your-own orchards in New Zealand, where she amazed everyone by downing copious quantities of fallen fruit. I was not too surprised at apples, pears and bananas, but to find she liked oranges (peeled, thank you!), plus all the berry fruits and a range of tropicals, was very surprising.

She liked most greens, particularly raw cabbage and lettuce, the crunchier the better. Wilted leaves were nudged away in disgust. It was the only time I knew her to be fussy. Like most Labradors, she loved her food and lots of it.

In the days when there was enough space for a potato patch, guess who would be hovering close by the fork, mouth drooling, while I was digging? She scored all the undersized ones straight out of the ground. Ditto with carrots. When I was picking peas and beans she would stay close, hoping for a handout. Of course, she always got one; I could never resist her pleading eyes.

In her doggy lifetime she lived in various places. Therefore, when getting her annual booster, I was able to compare differing veterinary viewpoints. One man told me he considered what I was doing as bordering on animal cruelty and that my dog would die before its time. 'They are carnivores', he said, firmly, 'and should be fed meat'. I think I've proved that to be a fallacy.

Another vet was very receptive to the idea as he had a sick child. His little girl was allergic to many foods, dangerously so to meat and dairy. To encourage her the family decided to forgo these foods. They achieved such an improvement in their health that they developed a total dedication to vegetarianism.

This same man remarked on what beautiful teeth my dog had and asked if I gave her bones. 'Just a few dog biscuits', I assured him. His comment? 'Well, the proof of the pudding . . .'

Labradors can often suffer from arthritis, especially if they're in and out of water. My dog certainly spent a lot of time in the water in her younger days, however, she remained free of this debilitating condition.

Perhaps I should mention food preparation. Just as my mother prepared food for the fowls during the war years, so I cooked all the vegie peelings, flavoured them with something tasty (usually Marmite), and then added variety with different kinds of grains or pulses. This took care of most of the kitchen scraps, which obviously did not make it to the compost heap. They were simply rerouted, if you like, via the dog.

Although gardening writers do not recommend the use of domestic pet manure for fertilising vegetables, or to go in the compost, I saw no reason for not using it around flowering shrubs and ornamental borders. It was, after all, vegetable matter.

The dog also had excellent bowel movements. Unless it's your job to dispose of them, or you are a nurse, a mother or involved in animal farming, this would probably escape your attention. Most of us do not major in scatology, yet, as all medical people are aware, stools are a great indicator of the general health of the patient. While not quite the consistency of cattle droppings, our dog's stools were very soft and easily passed. There is no escaping the importance of diet.

The dog never seemed to attract fleas; the one occasion she did was after a weekend stay in a registered kennel, but they soon disappeared. Was their absence due to the diet? I never used commercial washes, flea powder and the like. She was bathed in ordinary Sunlight soap and never had irritated skin, as many dogs have, especially in the summer months.

I recommend this style of feeding for dogs, for economy as well as health. She was a healthy, active animal and reached nearly 16 years. It's too bad that their lifetime is so much shorter than ours. She cost us so little and gave us so much fun.

Skin Care For Dogs

by Sharon McDonald, Pearcedale, Vic.

Many dogs suffer from skin problems and in most instances their owner assumes its eczema, but is it? I'm a veterinary nurse and am amazed by just how many people think Fido is inflicted with eczema. Actually, eczema is a generalised term and defined in the dictionary as a disease causing inflammation of the skin. That's a very broad definition and doesn't refer to a specific type of disease, just as flu is a general term for respiratory infection that can be caused by different mutations of virus.

Common causes of skin problems are bacteria, mites, fleas, fungi, obsessive-compulsive grooming or licking behaviour, allergies and humidity. All of these causes of skin complaints are commonly lumped under the heading of eczema.

It's fine to try alternative ways of treating animals without all the harsh chemicals, but there are a few points to consider. Whether it be for fungal, bacterial or parasitic infections like mites, bear in mind the fact that a dog's skin is physically thinner than ours, therefore potentially more sensitive. Essential oils that we use on ourselves may be too strong for them, even in a diluted form. If you do wish to try this, please do a tiny test patch first to make sure the skin is not further irritated. I have seen a kitten that had had eucalyptus oil wiped all over its face to treat fleas and consequently ended up with very sore and inflamed eyes. This could have caused permanent damage. It also caused the kitten to ingest some of the oil while frantically trying to groom it off its face.

Good old-fashioned salt water or vinegar and warm water solutions can be used to clean and aid in drying out moist areas like hot spots. If dealing with a hot spot, the most important consideration is to get the excess hair around the area clipped off so the skin can breathe and dry out. If not caught in time, these areas can end up with secondary infections that require veterinary attention. Please stay away from commercial iodine solutions unless used very very dilute. Most people tend to use too strong a concentration, which can be highly irritating to a dog's skin.

There are times when vets see cases where people have tried alternative methods for too long and by the time the animal is brought in it is an absolute mess and takes twice the amount of time to heal. Consider obtaining a diagnosis from a professional before starting home remedies or alternative treatment; it may save your pet additional unnecessary discomfort or pain.

HOT SPOTS

Hot spots are areas of red raw skin that are itchy and inflamed, usually caused by a localised skin infection. There may be a couple of flea bites or an area of matted hair, the animal scratches at it, the nails break the skin and exudate occurs, making the area moist. Further scratching lets the naturally present bugs on the dog in and the site becomes inflamed, red and raw. While a hot spot is easy to see in short-haired dogs, it may be well concealed in long-haired animals, so is quite established when discovered. Treatment from a vet is recommended.

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Wheat-Free Pancakes

by Wilma Margetts, Greenbank, Qld.

When you're eating gluten free it is often hard to find quick and satisfying savoury snacks. Pancakes are ideal; filling and nutritious. They can be made in next to no time and eaten warm on their own, or cooled and slathered in tahini, cottage cheese, salsa or a range of raw or cooked vegies. If there are any left, freeze them so they are ready to pounce on when you are too busy to stop and cook. For a tasty meal, make a stack and fill each layer with a different combination of cooked vegies and cheese; eat immediately or wrap in plastic and refrigerate, then cut like a loaf into colourful layers. Serve with homemade sauce or chutney.

CHICKPEA PANCAKES

Chickpea flour is pleasant tasting and high in protein, source it from health food shops or Indian or Middle Eastern food stores.

1¾ cups buttermilk
2 tbsp oil
2 eggs
1 cup chickpea flour
½ cup arrowroot, rice flour or gluten-free plain flour

Mix liquids and eggs together in a bowl, beating well with a fork or whisk. Add flours and beat to form a smooth batter. Let stand 20 minutes. Lightly oil crêpe pan or griddle and when hot drop a couple of tablespoons of batter to form a pancake. Three tablespoons makes a nice-sized pancake. Cook until lightly browned, turn over and cook second side. Cool on wire tray.

BUCKWHEAT PANCAKES

You can use buckwheat flour only, or follow this recipe where it is combined with another flour for a milder flavour.

¾ cup (or more) milk
1 tbsp oil
1 egg
¾ cup buckwheat flour
1 tbsp gluten-free plain flour

Mix liquids and egg together, then add flours, whisking to make a smooth batter. Let stand 15 minutes; cook as for chickpea pancakes.

LAZY PANCAKES

This basic recipe can be made using any gluten-free flour, but a lighter pancake results when you include the commercially prepared gluten-free plain flour with speciality flours.

1 egg, beaten
1 tbsp oil
1 cup flour mixture
2 tbsp plain yogurt
liquid – milk or water

Add beaten egg and oil to flour mix, then slowly stir in yogurt and enough liquid to make a batter that isn't runny but leaves the spoon easily. Whisk to remove flour lumps; stand for 15 minutes, then follow previous cooking directions.

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Fruit For Small Gardens
Temperate Climate

by Mary Horsfall, Euroa, Vic.

Home-grown fruit is delicious, nutritious, fresh, chemical free and cheap. So why aren't more people in the suburbs growing some? No space, do I hear? Rubbish! I don't care how small your space is; if you have a garden, or even a sunny balcony or courtyard, you can grow some fruit. Of course, spreading apple and pear trees are out of the question in many suburban gardens, but there is no shortage of other possibilities. Even though I now have a large block in town, it's a far cry from the country acreage I was once able to spread out in, so I've been putting some of these space-saving strategies into practice, with remarkable success.

DWARFING ROOTSTOCK

Ask your nursery about trees on dwarfing rootstock; these usually grow to only a couple of metres tall, but produce normal-sized fruit. An even more space-saving option, and one that suits small families who can't use a lot of fruit at once, is to buy multi-grafted or fruit salad trees. Up to 10 different fruits can be grafted onto the one dwarfing rootstock. Each variety will ripen at a slightly different time so the harvest is staggered. Multi-grafted trees are ideal for either a small spot in the garden or a tub on a sunny verandah or balcony.

Train To Horizontal Growth

I have two fruit salad trees, each with four grafts, espaliered at the north-facing end of a deck. Limbs are tied back to lattice attached to the deck. I don't aim for a particular shape, but just keep the main growth reasonably flat by cutting off any branches trying to grow the wrong way. Being so close to the house, I think bird thieves will not be a problem, but if they are all I need do is throw some net over the end of the deck to cover the trees while the fruit ripens. Now in the second year, growth is prolific and many of the grafts are cropping generously. The only problem so far is snails that crawl up the lattice and eat around the skins of the tiny nectarines; they don't seem to favour the peaches or plums. (A snail trap baited with ripe nectarine didn't work!) You might like to try the espalier method on a fence or a purpose-built post and wire structure.

Many of the berries – thornless blackberries, loganberries, raspberries, youngberries – are very suitable to grow along a fence or on a lattice or trellis frame. I have a piece of leftover reinforcing mesh on a section of fence. In a raised bed with red gum edging trained up the mesh are half a dozen youngberry canes rescued from the old garden. Directly in front of the berries are a few asparagus plants (self-sown seedlings from the old garden), and at the front of the bed are oregano and French tarragon. This permanent bed is only 2.4 metres long by a metre wide and is extremely fruitful, producing bountiful berries, a luxury vegie and herbs. Most of the berries will thrive in a dappled shady spot, but if your proposed spot is very shady, choose raspberries.

Passionfruit, grapes or kiwi fruit are other options for narrow spaces or along fences. Kiwis and grapes do need a strong supporting structure. Grapes and passionfruit will thrive in a sunny spot, kiwis will do well with more shade.

Multi-grafted fruit trees on dwarfing rootstock are surprisingly productive.

MINIATURISED CULTIVARS

Another option for a narrow space, perhaps along a path, is to plant a row of specially bred miniaturised fruit trees such as 'Ballerina' apples, 'Nectazee' nectarines or 'Pixee' peaches. 'Ballerina' apples grow to a height of three to four metres and are columnar in shape, ideal for a fruiting hedge. 'Nectazee' and 'Pixee' achieve a height and width of about 1.5 metres, smaller than trees on dwarfing rootstock. Why not ditch the standard roses

and replace them with an avenue of 'Ballerina' apples, or alternating 'Ballerinas' and 'Pixees' or 'Nectazees'? They look pretty, have lovely blossom and are productive to boot; they also don't have prickles to catch on your clothing as you walk by. Grow strawberries underneath as a ground cover and you'll have a very fruitful avenue.

ESPECIALLY STRAWBERRIES

Strawberries can be grown in many situations and are perfect for small gardens. They thrive in pots, whether it's specially designed strawberry pots, around the edge of a larger pot containing a fruit tree, or in a hanging pot. It's not only humans that like strawberries; slugs, snails, earwigs, birds and the family dog are also partial to a snack, so putting them in pots, especially up high, lets you keep the crop for your own enjoyment. Use strawberries as a productive edging to any garden bed, fill in odd corners with them, or dedicate a whole bed instead of growing flowering annuals if you have enough space and like them enough.

PERFECT FOR POTS

As well as those already mentioned above as being suitable for pot growing, try blueberry, pepino, feijoa, cherry guava, gooseberry and red and blackcurrants. Blueberries are the ones to choose for shadier spots and do need protection from hot afternoon sun. Gooseberries will thrive in dappled shade, but need wind protection; they're prickly so keep them away from traffic areas. Of the citrus trees, Tahitian lime, cumquat, mandarin and Meyer lemon are best suited to pot growing. Citrus are also available as multi-grafts and on dwarfing rootstock.

Of course, all of the above can be grown in any available spot in the garden. Remember that potted fruit trees need more attention than those in the ground and you must take care not to let the soil dry out, nor to leave it waterlogged. A layer of coarse gravel or similar material in the bottom of the pot will facilitate drainage. Plant into a top-quality, free-draining mixture containing a wetting agent and slow-release fertiliser. I like to use three parts potting mix to one part well decomposed compost to ensure continuous nutrient release and a healthy level of soil biodiversity. Mulch pots to help them retain moisture, but do not allow mulch to build up around trunks or stems.

Your fruiting plants will probably be in their pots for some years. Each early spring, remove the old mulch and scrape off the top few centimetres of soil. Aerate the soil with a fork if it is looking compacted. Top up with compost and a handful of blood and bone with added potash, or your own preferred fertiliser, and new mulch. You can repot into a bigger size tub every couple of years until the tree or bush has reached the desired size, in which case only replace the top of the soil in alternate years when you don't repot.

Glazed terracotta pots look fabulous, but often have insufficient drainage holes, are almost impossible to move once full of soil, and usually do not retain moisture as well as plastic pots.

BE PREPARED

Take a walk around your patch now and decide where you could plant some fruit trees, position some pots, or erect a lattice or trellis structure along a fence. Harden your heart and ditch some of those high-care, unproductive ornamentals; you won't regret it when you are enjoying your own luscious fruit. If planting into the ground, prepare the soil by digging a large hole and working in some compost and rotted manure. Visit your nursery to discuss your needs or obtain a catalogue and order what you want. Now you are ready to plant your crops in winter when most fruiting plants of temperate regions are dormant.

Useful Contacts

Multi-grafted trees on dwarfing rootstock, fruit salad trees, are available from: Fruit Salad Tree Co, 'Willow Creek', Gulf Rd, Emmaville 2371. Ph: 02-6734-7204.

The Diggers Club sells some fruit trees, including citrus and pepinos. Ask for their winter catalogue: 105 Latrobe Pde, Dromana 3936. Ph: 03-5987-1877.

New Gippsland Seed Farm sells berry plants and seeds of some others. Contact: PO Box 1, Silvan 3795. Ph: 03-9737-9560.

The miniaturised fruit trees and many others are distributed by Flemings Nurseries, which can be contacted at: www.flemings.com.au

More Information

Many *Grass Roots* back issues have articles on fruit suitable for small gardens. GR 132: espaliering fruit trees; 164: growing feijoas; 146 and 125: growing strawberries; 122: growing kiwi fruit; 165: creating a netted mini orchard: 159: growing grapes in pots; 152: backyard citrus growing; 140 and 124: growing berries; 116: fruit salad trees; 95: growing tropical and subtropical fruits in temperate climates. See page 82 for details of how to order back issues.

Livestock Health and Management

Information You Need but Haven't Known Where to Ask

If you have queries on any type of livestock send them in and we'll get our panel of experts to research the problem for you. Post them to Livestock Advice Page, Grass Roots, PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

FEEDING QUAIL

Thank you for such a down-to-earth magazine. A few of the glossy magazines could learn from your publication of *Grass Roots*. Keep up the good work. Another reason that I'm writing to you is for some help in feeding quails. At the moment I have two male quails that need females, but I'm unsure of the best type of food to give them. The quails currently receive mealworms, mini meals, fly pupae and canary seed. I was told by a shop owner to purchase turkey food, but I am unable to find a local source. I would be very grateful for any help with my quails.

Victoria Cattanach,
EMERALD 3782.

Although you haven't specified which species of quail you have, we'll start with Japanese as they are the most common. They are generally fed turkey starter crumbles because its high protein content is suited to their nutritional needs. This species has a naturally high metabolism and most breeders find turkey rations meet the birds' needs. You can order turkey starter at a feed produce store. Pelleted rations are too large to be fed to quails, but a coarse grain mix is suitable. If you can maintain the feeding regime you are already following, just adding a few shredded greens, your birds will thrive. Aviary species like Bobwhites or Californian quails can be fed budgie mix (80 percent) and turkey starter (20 percent) when young, with the latter phased out as they mature. A few mealworms regularly will be appreciated. King quails are an Australian species and very easy to breed. Feed them budgie seed plus lettuce leaves, which they really love and will shred to pieces. Be aware that Japanese quails have a high libido so will do best at a breeding ratio of one male to three or four females.

HOOF TRIMMING

Thank you for the advice on hoof trimming, it's a job we have been reluctant to do. Judging by the information in the article, we've been attempting to do it in midsummer when our sheep's hooves are literally uncuttable. We've bought the recommended hoof trimmers from our produce store and are now waiting for the wet weather when the task will be easier. Thanks GR for tackling routine jobs like pet care and worming and bringing them down to the beginner's level.

Chris & Annie,
TOOWOOMBA 4350.

BREEDING SHEEP

We have just bought a ram for our little flock of pet sheep. We've got about 11 ewes (a couple are ewe lambs) plus several wethers. Should we have bought two rams and will we need to replace the ram every year? This will sound very ignorant, but how soon could we expect the ewes to become in lamb and what is the gestation period?

Libby & Jane,
CASTERTON 3311.

Ewes cycle on a 20-day basis, coming into oestrus around day 17 and staying fertile for about three days, so there is every likelihood some of your ewes have already been mated and you can anticipate lambs in five months time. Next year you might like to plan lambing so the young are in their fast growth spurt when your paddocks carry good feed. Put the ram in with the ewes in December if your area gets good autumn rain, or put him in between February and May if the pasture is best in late spring. You asked about appropriate breeding ratios of rams to ewes: your fellow will hardly raise a sweat with just 11 ewes to serve; many paddock rams are expected to serve several times that number. You can expect your ram to have a working life of up to five years.

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ECO NEWS

VERY FISHY BUSINESS

A recent study, the first of its kind in the world, has mapped the worldwide distribution of predatory fish diversity, and the findings are not good news. It seems that diversity of large predatory fish such as tuna, marlin, sailfish and swordfish has fallen by up to 50 percent in the past 50 years. Overfishing, habitat destruction and climate change are taking their toll on the ocean's predators. Many species too suffer population decline when they inadvertently become bycatch. The study identified five remaining areas in the world where species diversity is still rich, one being Australia's Great Barrier Reef. Other healthy marine ecosystems were found off the east coast of Florida, south of Hawaii, off Sri Lanka and north of Easter Island in the South Pacific. These findings highlight the need for the establishment of significant areas of internationally protected marine parks in which fish species can recover populations. For some species it could already be too late: cod, Patagonian toothfish and Atlantic halibut numbers have plummeted alarmingly.

FUELS OF THE FUTURE?

Dwindling oil supplies and soaring prices have motivated increased research into possible petrol alternatives in recent times, how viable any of them become will be interesting to discover in the future. In all cases there are technological and cost problems to be overcome. Technological challenges are usually overcome in time and, though none of the options yet seems economically viable, as oil prices become even higher this perception could change. There are some promising lines of research in Australia.

At Monash University researchers are super-heating wood from the oil mallee tree to extract a vapour that can be condensed into a liquid, refined and used to fuel diesel engines. Plantations of mallee trees for the purpose of fuel production could also have the benefits of reducing the water table (and thus reversing salinity) in salt-affected agricultural areas of WA, and of acting as carbon sinks to offset greenhouse gases produced by vehicle emissions – a neat environmental benefits circle.

Meanwhile, a CSIRO team has developed a device that extracts enough hydrogen per day from water to power a car for up to 150 kilometres. The device is a solid-state system based on polymer electrolyte membranes; it generates the hydrogen on-site and stores it for use when needed. At present it runs on mains power, but researchers are investigating powering the unit with renewable energy.

In what seems the most unusual option to date, *New Scientist* magazine (22 October, 2005) reports that a researcher in the US is working on ways to reuse scrap metal such as iron, aluminium and boron to fuel cars. The metals are turned into a powder with grains nanometres across. The powder is ignited and the released energy, in a modified engine, could enable a family car to travel three times as far as it does on a tank of petrol. The metal nano-fuel is said to be almost completely nonpolluting and fully rechargeable. The spent nanoparticles, treated with hydrogen, could be reused indefinitely. Could old cars of the past be used to fuel cars of the future?

ENVIRONMENTAL FLOW

In October 2005 NSW and Victorian State Governments began releasing 500 billion litres of water into the Barmah-Millewa Forest, a significant wetland comprising about 66,000 hectares of floodplain of the Murray River. The wetland is listed on the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance. The release, over a five-month period, has stimulated lush vegetation growth and breeding cycles in wetland birds, fish, frogs, turtles and other wildlife. Great egrets bred in the Barmah for the first time in 30 years. It was the first flooding of the area for five years and scientists are excitedly monitoring the results, which could be crucial for the long-term survival of some species. After the flooding about 80 percent of the water will return to reinvigorate the Murray's main channel.

BOG REGENERATION

In the Canberra bushfires of 2003 significant areas of subalpine bogs were destroyed. The bogs play an important role in water flow through the alpine ecosystem and are crucial as habitat for a variety of specialised flora and fauna, including the endangered corroboree frog. They are also a significant element of Canberra's water supply, purifying it and storing it for slow, continuous release. The bogs are basically a giant sponge of sphagnum moss over a peat base and seldom become dry enough to be badly affected by fire. Once dry, the peat base is virtually impossible to rewet and begins to erode, leading to destruction of the bog. The Sphagnum Moss Bog Restoration Project is using a new technique to aid bog recovery. Bales and 'sausages' of rice straw are dug in along contours and likely erosion channels to reduce water velocity and erosion, retain water and prevent peat drying, and allow sphagnum moss and other wetland flora to regrow. Work has concentrated on the most severely affected bogs and those of most habitat and water-supply importance.

TOXINS AFFECT WILDLIFE

Arctic polar bears, already stressed by global warming, are being adversely affected by a range of industrial pollutants, which are carried to the Arctic by wind and ocean currents where cold temperatures cause them to break down slowly. The pollutants accumulate in the fatty tissues of polar bears and other Arctic fauna. Long-term effects include weakened immune systems, altered bone structure and compromised sex hormones. Flame retardants are the latest in a long list of implicated pollutants.

In America chemicals from sunscreens and contraceptive pills have been implicated in gender confusion of fish near sewerage outfalls. Large numbers of male hornyhead turbot and English sole near a sewerage outfall five kilometres off a Los Angeles beach were found to be growing ovary tissue in their testes. Being blamed are oestrogen from contraceptive pills and oxybenzone from sunscreens.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

To Megg, Mary & Friends,

Has anyone else ever noticed that **TREES BRING RAIN**? For 40 years now I have held this belief (and over the years it has gotten me into more than a few arguments). It was back then that I saw about an acre of trees left standing in the middle of a wide, brown, drought-stricken grain field near Goondiwindi in western Queensland. It remains the most incredible sight I have ever seen. The horizon was as bare and flat as a billiard table, and that single clump of trees was being rained down upon; from one solitary cloud floating vertically above, in an otherwise bare blue sky – truly. Unfortunately, the driver refused to stop and my camera was in the back of the ute . . . damn! Has anyone else ever seen such a sight?

Right now, in the hottest summer in Australia's recorded history, is a good time to compare the rainfalls and the tree covers of different dam water catchment areas. Large cities like Brisbane and Toowoomba – with their countless huge old trees, some hundreds of years old – now consistently get more rainfall than their rural, treeless municipal water catchment areas. Have our cities become the new, and maybe the last, rainforests?

Dam catchments like Wivenhoe in the increasingly treeless Brisbane Valley seldom get wet, while Brisbane itself is regularly drenched by summer storms. Yet these cities suffer seemingly continuous council water restrictions.

Toowoomba, once promoted as Australia's 'Garden City', is now better known for its residents recently being forced to choose whether they should drink their own toilet water – after it had been treated of course – or not. While they are thinking outside the square, maybe they should consider if sprouting green tree leaves somehow act as rain magnets.

Trever J Wilkins,
10325 Wondai Chinchilla Rd, DURONG 4160.
Ph: 07-4164-8181.
Email: treverwilkins@hotmail.com
Website: ezeEnglish.com

Dear Grass Roots,

Through your Feedback section I wish to enquire if any reader has installed a **SOLAR HEATING SYSTEM** for a swimming pool. I have a 4.6 x 4.6 x 1 metre deep concrete pool and would like to have the water a bit warmer. I would be grateful for any feedback from any readers.

Jim Reid,
Ph: 03-9739-5761.
Mob: 0410-567-122.

Anyone got a homemade solar hot water system for a swimming pool? We'd love an article.

Hi,

In Sandy Ide's article about the **SURROGATE MOTHER DUCK IN GR 170**, she said the black duck eggs she received were unidentified. I wonder if they could be Cayuga ducks. We have two and when one of our hens went broody we put some of them under her. Good news! Our first one hatched this morning and ours look the same as the photo in your article. The Cayugas are good layers, the male having a green gloss to the neck, greenish-grey bill and the curl in the tail feathers. The female's bill is black and she has a louder voice.

My kids read this story after I showed it to them and the first thing they asked about was 'who's going to teach him to swim?' I told them to leave it to mother nature.

Hope this is of some help as it's my first attempt at cross-species surrogacy!

Cindy Holt,
KILMORE 3764.

Dear Grass Roots,

Here is another happy person in the **LOVELY COOL OF TASMANIA**. Never again will I have to go through a heat wave in WA. I am about to buy a nice piece of land in Tunbridge that will suit me perfectly as I now have a brilliant show cat, a Japanese Bobtail, Aku Saku (Japanese for 'Little Flower'). I'll be able to get to cat shows in either Evandale or Hobart without breaking the bank. The land is over two acres and I plan on a vegie garden, raising meat rabbits in a shearing shed (sorry Glenice) and growing whatever to pay the place off and put up a proper home as the accommodation is temporary. The angst I've gone through is unbelievable. I've been stuck with raising the last $1000, but it seems it will now all fall into place.

At last I can help a couple of people. Suzanne of Melbourne: male cats, which I have in the past had desexed, were put onto the pill for female cats for about a week and it certainly stopped them spraying. For Mrs Matthews of Brookton: Phoenix Seeds (PO Box 207, Snug 7054, ph: 03-6267-9663, fax: 03-6267-9592) sell **MIGNONETTE SEEDS** and their catalogue tells me they are scented.

Hope everyone had a great Christmas. Suni, I am so pleased you got a pair of kittens, it is the best thing to do.

Pat Gardiner,
C/- Post Office, WINNALEAH 7265.

Dear GR,

I believe your magazine would have to be the most inspiring of them all. I first saw it at a renovated, much-loved home in Kangarilla, SA. Many thanks to Dolores Dankel for introducing me to this great magazine.

While living in Pannawonica, WA, I tried growing some vegies, with limited success, but it was thrilling: digging, planting and then trying to keep the millions of insects away without poisons.

Now, here I am in Mackay, Queensland, with a different partner and many nomadic years behind me, ready to bog down and convert my man to a more satisfying life. We only have a quarter-acre block, but with three lovely chickens pecking around our feet out the back it has possibilities. We have a chicken tractor, which the chickens spend a small amount of time in, but it is so much nicer seeing them roam around. We aren't quite ready for the type of place with 'room for a tennis court', but given a few more years among the chickens and pumpkin patch there might be hope.

I have smatterings of knowledge, except on **WARTS**. My four kids have warts on their elbows and feet and so far the occasional dry ice treatment has been effective. If anyone has any cures I would be most grateful. Many thanks.

Andrea McPherson,
1 Krause Crt, ANDERGROVE 4740.

Dear Grass Roots,

I've just discovered your magazine and feel like I've made a new friend. I'm looking forward to future issues. I own a top floor unit in Sydney. I'm where I need to live right now and until I realise my dream of living in a more rural setting. What can I do to keep my sanity? I have a **PROBLEM WITH NOISE** – mainly internal, through floors and some walls. There is carpet and regular underlay over timber flooring. I'm not much of a handyperson. I can spend some money on soundproofing, if I must, but not a fortune. I'm unsure about what to do. I hope that GR readers can forward suggestions to me. Thank you.

Debbie Black,
EDGECLIFF 2027.
Email: blackmail58@optusnet.com.au

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GRs,

Anyone interested in a sea change might like to hear about our town of **MURRURUNDI**, which straddles the New England Highway, one hour south of Tamworth, 35 minutes north of Scone. Its name means 'places where the mist sits', and it is indeed a geographically magical place, surrounded by sculpted rock outcrops and watered by the Pages River, which meanders through the town.

What is so special about Murrurundi? To start with, land and housing ranges from the ridiculously cheap to the enormously expensive: a five-bedroom Colonial-style home, for example, would sell for a fraction of what you would expect to pay in even a cheap area of Sydney. The air is clean – no brown city scum on the skyline – the seasons are real and the living is good. There are many opportunities for self-sufficiency, a clean safe place to raise a family, and also for the small-business person, plumber, electrician, painter, builder.

So, sounds like paradise; what is wrong with the place?

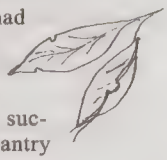
My advice would be come and look at Paradise Park, the golf club and the Eye of the Needle, but don't buy real estate on the highway if you don't like truck traffic, though the trucks have recently been slowed down by means of speed cameras.

Come and bring your business acumen to country life, come and see the beauty, walk on the oldest suspension bridge in Australia. Come and see for yourself, maybe you will, as I have, find your Shangri-la.

Lyndal Findlay,
107 Mayne St, MURRURUNDI 2338.

Dear Grass Roots,

I have just read the October/November edition and would like to add to Jenny Lancaster's advice about **WEEVILS**. I agree with her freezing method, but I have had problems with large-scale items such as bags of grain. Some time ago I was told or read that bay leaves will deter weevils, so have tried this in very badly infested bags of corn and had great success. I also find a few leaves thrown into the pantry does the trick.



Now for another matter. We have one dog among our family **DOGS** that keeps getting many **TICKS** no matter what we do. He is treated like all the other dogs and they don't have a problem. I believe it may be an internal problem, not external. Can anyone help? I am a new reader and am extremely impressed with the wonderful communication and information. Many thanks.

Maureen Quirk,
ROCKHAMPTON 4701.

Dear GR Readers,

Once again I am asking for your help. After being very sick for the best part of the year, I am left with a very altered set of taste buds that can't take anything very sweet and a violent dislike for any artificial sweeteners. This I can cope with, except that I have been given four kilograms of fresh apricots that I want to make into jam. I have got them ready to go and frozen them into two-kilogram lots (no stones and lightly cooked), but they need **SOME FORM OF SWEETENER**. What and how much? And will I need Jamsetta as I did buy some in case? Can anyone help me? Looking forward to hearing from you.

Margaret Theobald,
23 Coonanga Ave, BUDGEWOI 2262.
Email: catscastle@bigond.com.au

Margaret, you will find an article about sugarless jams in GR 83. There was an article about stevia, a herbal sweetener, in GR 129. See page 82 for how to order back copies. Good luck and let us know if you find any other good recipes.

Dear Grass Roots,

Love your magazine, get to read it through our mobile library mostly. Further to last issue's paragraph from GM Lee of Kingaroy, here are two different recipes for **CHILLI CORDIAL**, which is a most popular drink all year round in North Queensland.

For the first recipe you need: 20 – 24 Birdseye chillies, 1 dessertspoon tartaric acid, 2 dessertspoons lemon juice, 4 cups sugar, 5 cups water. Cut 4 chillies in half lengthwise, place all chillies in a large pan with water and sugar and bring to the boil for 10 minutes. Cool and strain. Add tartaric acid and lemon juice. Bottle and seal. Dilute one to four. I sometimes use both lime and lemon juice or use kaffir lime leaves with the chillies when boiling syrup. This recipe is from the Herb Society of North Queensland recipe book, *Recipes from the Tropics*.

The next recipe is from *The Presbyterian Cookery Book*, first published in 1895, and is labelled 'OT'. One small handful chillies, 1½ cups water (extra), 1½ kilograms sugar, 12 cups water, 1 tablespoon citric acid, 1 tablespoon lemon essence. Boil chillies in 1½ cups water, then strain liquid. Put sugar and 12 cups water into a saucepan and boil for 20 minutes, add citric acid and chilli water, cool. Add essence of lemon, strain and bottle. Both these cordials are delicious with soda water.

Helen Dyer,
22 August Drv, ROLLINGSTONE 4816.
Email: hrdyer@bigpond.com

Dear GR Readers,

Many thanks to all people who have replied to my requests for seeds and a lavender oil extractor. Notes have been taken and many letters written. Since our letter was printed we have moved out of the rat race of Port Pirie and onto a lovely block of land at **HALLETT, SA**. We decided to move so we could live at a slower pace and with my chemical intolerance it seemed the best option.

Hallett is a very small country town steeped in history, the country shop has everything one wants and there are several tourist destinations to see. People should slow down and take a look around. We have a tourist drive called Dares Hill, which takes over three hours to do, but the scenery is stunning, a lovely area for painters or photographers. Then there is Sir Wilkins's cottage. Sir Wilkins was the famous arctic explorer and Dick Smith helped fund a committee which rebuilt Sir Wilkins's birthplace. We live two hours north of Adelaide on the Adelaide to Broken Hill highway, there is plenty to see and do, the weather is great and the people are friendly.

Apart from spending time looking around, we have also been busy. We have planted a 100-tree mixed fruit orchard and have a vegie garden in. Everything that is done here is all organic. We are selling our veg to several shops and soon will be selling direct to the public from our house. People will be very surprised at how low our prices will be. So we look forward to talking to all you fellow travellers who pass our house. We sit and wonder just where you are heading and wish we were going too. Enjoyed the write-up about the organic berry farm. Our fruit won't be ready for picking for at least two years, but the berry farmers' story gives us an insight into what it will be like in two years.

SS,
HALLETT 5419.

Contributors and correspondents who want letters or articles returned are requested to include correct postage.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Editor,

I'd like to say how much I appreciate all the ideas, recipes, tips and very clever lateral thinking that all you people out there willingly share with the rest of us. There's no better way to learn and disseminate information than by a pool of *Grass Roots* knowledge, learnt by doing. A big thank-you to all who take the trouble to send your ideas into Feedback. Here's hoping that you all gain the answers you need at the time.

I admire those who take the big step of moving onto acreage to work at a measure of self-sufficiency. It takes courage to do that and I wish you well. I guess the main thing is for all of us to **PROVIDE FOR OURSELVES AS MUCH AS WE CAN** without harming nature and the earth around us wherever we happen to live. Sometimes it's not possible to make the sea change for reasons of cost, poor health, lack of mobility, employment and so on, but I think all earth people have the same goals of a healthy happy life, growing as much of their own food as possible, avoiding poisons or anything harmful and cooperating with nature and their neighbours to achieve those ends.

A comment for Andrea from Capalaba, soon moving onto seven acres, who asked about greywater. I've been using Planet Ark laundry powder for several years and all my wash water goes onto the garden with no ill effects. Info on the packet says you can use both wash water and rinse water, hope that's helpful (much success in your new life too).

Does anyone know about **GROWING MARULA PLUM FROM SEED**? I'd be glad to hear if you've been successful. I'm working with a second lot of seed, but no luck. Having said that, although I'll continue to try this seed, I've finally learnt that as we live in a tropical zone, the best thing is to search for tropical vegies, rather than attempt to grow the northern hemisphere vegies of my childhood. We live and learn. If anyone can suggest easy hot weather veg, please contact. I have a few but I'm always searching for more.

Finally, I love trying out new recipes and am off to try Teresa Vanni's cagginetti; will look forward to more of her Italian cooking ideas later in the year!

Val S,
Email: rsmether@bigpond.net.au

Dear Grass Roots,

I have been a reader for many years and enjoy every issue. We have a mulberry tree that fruits in January. Is there anyone out there with a failproof recipe for **MULBERRY WINE**? I have never made wine.

We would like to hear from anyone who is growing a tree crop for timber as an investment. We have a small piece of land and have various eucalypts, which are two to three years old. We are also considering sandalwood for a small area.

Jacqui & Tony Rawling,
PO Box 37, BAKERS HILL 6562.

There was a recipe for mulberry wine in an article on basic wine making in GR 98. See page 82 for how to order back copies.

Dear Grass Roots,

Thank you for a very informative and entertaining magazine; my family has lots of nervous laughs at all the ideas I share with them after being inspired by your articles! At times I get the feeling that I have hit a brick wall researching a project, however, I know that GR readers will surely be able to help when all else fails. This has been my experience from previous enquiries (namely about earthships in Australia), so I am confident that this occasion will not be an exception. I am interested in obtaining a **BAMIX CLOTHES WASHING PRESSURE BARREL**. I saw this some years ago and I made an enquiry with Bamix. They informed me that they no longer make these. Does anyone out there have one that they no longer want or, alternatively, know where I can get one? They use minimal water and are manually operated, hence no need for power. They are ideal for camping and are a must for everyone interested in conserving resources while enjoying clean clothes. Please can anyone help?

Sally Gerhard,
Email: sally@esnursing.com.au

Dear Grass Roots,

In GR 173 Leonie asked for a recipe for **PINEAPPLE HONEY**. Cook 1 kilogram finely minced pineapple in its own juice in a covered pan until soft. Slowly add 1 kilogram heated sugar and the juice of 2 lemons. Cook quickly for 30 minutes, then pour into warm jars and seal when cold.

Dulcie Clark – saffron bulbs can be purchased from Tesselaar Bulbs, 357 Monbulk Rd, Silvan, Victoria 3795. They will send a catalogue on request.

Piper nigrum, the black pepper, is a tropical rainforest perennial vine. It may be grown indoors. The only company selling packets of 50 seeds at $3.62 each is Whatcom Seed Company, PO Box 40700, Eugene, OR, 97404 USA, or website: seedrack.com

Country Woman,
URALLA 2358.

Dear GR Readers,

Ever since my letter about **AUTISM** appeared in GR 170 I have received letters and phone calls from readers offering to share advice with me. Much to my delight, one of those letters was from GR regular reader Vicki Judd, who wrote a lovely long and beautifully handwritten letter. I immediately replied with an equally long but computer-typed letter.

Since then Vicki and I have written to each other several times, with long and chatty letters, describing in great detail just what we have been going through with our respective boys. Just getting through the day for most people is often challenging enough, but life becomes that much more difficult to cope with when dealing with the challenges of a child with autism. However, I am fortunate to have an understanding group of mothers; they don't even have a child with autism, but are always there for me to offer moral support, and not forgetting emotional support as well. But I feel that I now have some extra support (albeit distant) from another mother who knows exactly what it is like.

I mentioned in a previous letter in GR how many of the regular readers seem to be so much like family – the GR family. Having made contact with Vicki and other regular GR readers over the past few years, I feel perhaps that maybe I might also be one of the GR family members. So until next time I get the chance to chat to you all again – take care and keep writing all about life's happenings, whether they be triumphs or tribulations. It doesn't do us any good to bottle it up inside – write it down and let it out. A problem shared is a problem halved – so friends keep telling me.

Heather Golding,
126 Cliff Barrons Rd, UPPER ORMEAU 4208.

You are indeed one of the GR family Heather and we appreciate your willingness to discuss autism so honestly. It helps us all to understand the challenges and frustrations families with offspring with special needs encounter daily. As you've found, you're not on your own, and when you have a letter published in Feedback the response from the GR family is often overwhelming. Great stuff!

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GR Readers,

I've been busier than usual as I've got three acres that needed clearing of weeds of all kinds, the latest being masses of blackberries, but it's looking better as time goes on. To replace the weeds I've been taking cuttings and propagating seeds to plant. One plant I'd love is the **CLIMBING HYDRANGEA**; it's quite unusual. Also any seeds from the New Zealand native tree the **KOWHAI** (pronounced Kofeye). I'd so much appreciate any seeds/cuttings that grow in this temperate climate. The more unusual the better, but if possible I'd love to be able to know the name. You can never stop learning, especially about gardening.

MD,
146 Bridge St, URALLA 2358.

Dear GR Readers,

How many of us have walked or even picnicked in our local park, enjoying the green grass and the day out? But behind such a picturesque setting there could lie a hidden policy. Have you noticed that there are no broad-leaf weeds, especially on the oval?

In September 2003 I learnt first-hand about my council's policy to spray every square centimetre of the major parks. Later on I learnt that the sport ovals have been sprayed for the past 20 years. It was on a very windy day that I noticed a smell in the air. Looking downwind over the fence onto the park behind my home, I saw a sight that I could not believe. There, like a condor with its wings spread out, was a ute towing a herbicide machine with its booms out spraying the grass in the park. Back and forth it went till every square centimetre was sprayed. The herbicide used was Banvel, a chemical that Worksafe Australia regards as hazardous. One ingredient of concern was MCPA, which the company states is toxic to man. I found information on the internet that MCPA could be dangerous to children, since where it has been used children become unhealthy. Needless to say, 'man' is regarded as a healthy adult. What is even more alarming is that children do not completely develop their immune systems until 11 years old. The other ingredient was dicamba, which should not be used next to trees with exposed roots or young trees. The herbicide has a half-life of two weeks, and breaks down in the soil, as long as the soil is not dried out and the microbes to break it down are in the soil. No signs are put up to warn the public.

As many of you know very well, dealing with council can be very frustrating indeed. It also became clear that the spraying would be repeated once a year and it was legal. After a lot of thought about the importance to the family's health and the contradictory statements of council about health and environment, I decided that I had to do something more than just ask questions and I had one year until the next spraying.

I did a common law course with Upmart. The course taught me how to write a letter of demand and prepare the forms to take the matter to court. I learnt how to use the internet. I started to go down to council meetings, so as not to get intimidated if I had to go to court. I spoke to the councillors. To my surprise, they were not really interested. The service manager, when I asked him how he protected his family from herbicides, told me that that was a matter between himself and his wife and none of my business. I promised myself not to get stressed and to accept the fact that this would take time.

The Notice of Demand took me three weeks to put together and had 43 facts. I had four demands, which would protect myself and my family from the spray and its drift and prevent contamination of my fruit trees whose roots no doubt ventured into the park. To spray is legal. How it is done can be illegal. Four months later all my demands were met, and more. No herbicides were to be used in the park. My conclusion is that the council does what it wants because: people do not know their rights and where they come from, people do not know how to protect their rights at law, people do not have the time and courage to fight at law, people do not live as a community.

Listening to all the talk about saving the environment, I feel strongly that this issue should go further. Looking up the Acts it is clear that what my council is doing is against the law. Most of all, even within the legal definition, the world 'environment' includes humans. The most important aspect of our environment is the children, their wellbeing and future. All of which the councillors agree with, as stated many a time at council meetings.

I do not think that I would be wrong to take this matter further. I need to develop my people skills and find help from someone who can draw cartoons. So if you live in Melbourne and can draw cartoons or know someone who can, I hope you will contact me. There is nothing like a bit of humour at the council's expense to get to the people.

For those who have problems with a council, I suggest you do an Upmart course (upmart.org). Be aware of stress. Magnesium is the first mineral to be lost from the body, so be prepared to top it up. Gather as much information as you can from council's own publications and other council information pamphlets. Most of all work on your courage and be prepared to drop what you might be doing. My new prayer is that if God wants me to do all that I am intending to do, he has to give me more time and longer to live. Do your best to enjoy the experience and realise that if you get angry it's because you don't know what to do next. Be prepared to meet your next teacher. Politics is a game, so go to council meetings.

Fred Bailey,
29 Taylor Ave, RESERVOIR 3073.

Dear GRs,

Greetings from northern Tasmania. I have been a subscriber to GR for years, and eagerly look forward to each new issue.

In GR 172 there appeared an article by Margery and Margaret Robson, of Leongatha, Victoria, entitled '**BOTTLING FRUIT IN THE MICROWAVE**'. Having had a good crop of berries and plums this season, I tried this method and found that it worked to perfection. Looking closely at the photo accompanying the article, I found that vegetables had also been preserved. Having had an oversupply of fresh beans from the garden, I tried to bottle them using salted boiling water instead of syrup as the solution to accompany the cooked beans into the bottles, but alas, failure was the order of the day. After four days, the pop-tops on the bottles blew and the contents of the bottles had turned into a fermented mass. Are there any guidelines available for the would-be home-preserver using the microwave method of bottling? Perhaps the authors of the article could be encouraged to publish another article setting out their findings in relation to **PRESERVING FRESH VEGETABLES**.

Cedric Trower,
PO Box 22, CARRICK 7291.
Email: rexotee@dodo.com.au

Please keep letters brief, clearly written and relevant to self-sufficiency topics. Letters pushing barrows (religious, political or other) will not be published.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Hello Everyone,

My partner Gill and I are currently staying in an unused outstation on the Strzelecki Track, a very challenging place to stay, but we are not here for long and sometime in early April our journey will begin again. We have already travelled over 1300 kilometres with our **HUGE FAMILY OF PREVIOUSLY UNWANTED AND ABUSED ANIMALS** and are travelling in a beautiful Gypsy wagon (made by Gill) that is pulled by eight to ten of our 21 camels! We also have with us dogs and goats, our rooster and his six hens (mostly retired), a donkey and two pigeons – several of these animals we have picked up along the way.

We set off on this journey last year, after selling our five-acre property in Alice. The cost of buying hay ($16 per bale) kept us running on a treadmill and, unable to leave all our animals while we went to look for a new home, we finally decided to take them all with us and head off on an adventure to find land big enough for us all to live. Gill and I over the years have taken in many different rescued animals; as Gill says, 'It's easy to love the lovable'. So we have often provided a home to animals that needed intensive care to recover, we have treated camels covered in mange and we have had animals that were so frightened of people that they acted aggressively. Without exception we have seen that in a space of love, no matter how frightened or how angry an animal was, they all recovered.

When we do reach that much yearned for place we can call home, we'll create a healing sanctuary for animals and people. It seems that when people learn to feel better about who they are the planet and all its inhabitants benefit. Spending a few days in our loving family, trekking with camels and at the end of the day sitting around a fire with a donkey, some camels and an old rooster (such a gentleman) contentedly at your side, while you watch the antics of our goats, soon puts life into perspective. Travelling with all these animals can be hard work, keeping them all well and happy and caring for all their needs often makes for a very long day, but the gifts from this magical time are so numerous we feel well and truly blessed.

Heading off on this trip I faced some of my biggest fears. At times it felt like we were absolutely divinely guided and at other times I questioned our sanity to even contemplate such a journey. However, what I now know for sure is that when you live your dreams, however crazy they may appear to others, when you take a chance and head out into the unknown, life always looks after you, and whenever you need help it's there.

The next leg of our journey takes us up the Strzelecki to Camerons Corner, then we will be heading to Bourke and up into NSW and Queensland. We are looking for around 2000-plus acres with its own water and are very curious about the Inglewood/Texas area, just on the border of Queensland. It seems like land is reasonably priced there and as we have our own internet business, we can live anywhere; we just need a phone line. We would love to hear from people in this area. What is it like? We don't use chemicals, so being somewhere where there is no crop spraying is essential. All our animal treatments are herbal or old Gypsy remedies; we are vegetarians (how could we eat our friends?) and would love to connect with some like-minded people anywhere, so please drop us a line. We can be contacted at our old post box in Alice as we have a friend forwarding our mail. It may take some time to reply, depending on where we are and how many weeks to the next post office. Alternatively, check out our website and please sign the guest book. Once again, we will only get to view this when we manage to use the internet. When we do reach home, we have all the contacts.

If you see us on the road, do stop and say hello. We soon realised that travelling in such a big family of animals gets a lot of attention and gave up trying to make the miles in favour of a good chat at the side of the road. Some days we can travel 25 kilometres and other days three! But you can guarantee that on the days we only made three kilometres some great yarns were shared. Until next time.

Kye & Gill Wheadon,
PO Box 7817, ALICE SPRINGS 0871.
Website: www.animalrescuecamelcaravan.com

Dear Grass Roots Readers,

We are hoping someone can help us. We are a family of six (ages five to 14) and Brett and I are in our low 40s. We live in the Lockyer Valley on 10 acres in a nearly renovated Queenslander. We are working towards organic self-sufficiency with cattle, sheep, milking goats, pigs and chooks. We have a small orchard and brambleberries, which will increase as the creek flows again.

We are looking for a person, couple or family, who would like to holiday here several long weekends a year, plus a week or two every year or so. We prefer someone regular and reliable, as the dairy goats like routine and familiar faces. This would suit someone wanting to try out this lifestyle, or wanting a cheaper family holiday alternative. Our winters are cold and summers can be hot.

We know the right people/person is out there with a similar GR attitude. Please feel free to call on 07-5427-9551 or email us on weinholt@dodo.com.au We are looking forward to meeting you.

Brett & Diana Payne,
TARAMPA 4311.

Dear GR Readers,

I feel I must tell you about my trusty 'Bulldog' garden spade, as referred to in Round the Market Place, GR 172. Mine is the smaller type; it now has a welded pipe handle and has been in constant use for 40 years. I've used it for everything from normal gardening to levering heavy railway sleepers and moving concrete laundry tubs. A wonderful, recommended implement!

I enjoyed bottling some sliced peaches in the microwave, a new experience for me; they look delicious.

I have a query too. I'm looking for a knitted pattern for an **ADULT-SIZED BERET**, if anyone has one please. I'll gladly pay postage.

Love this magazine.

Jan Clifton,
15 Boronia St, SCONE 2337.

Hi There,

I do hope these few lines find all the GR crew in good health and spirits. I wish you all a wonderful year ahead, filled with peace and contentment, good health and enough wealth of crops or money to keep the proverbial wolf from the door. Of course, I wish the same for all my fellow GR readers too.

It's been a while since I've written. The past years have been busy. I've had an ongoing battle with cancer, which, to date, I have won again, and I've been helping my son with his children since their mother fell victim to a mental illness and left them all.

Can anyone put me in touch with Marjorie McGuire, Barry McDonald or Jim Haab/Thorn, or does anyone have news of their wellbeing? If someone has news, I'd be grateful. Also, anyone who knew Helen Di Stefano would get a reply!

Helen Flockhart,
3/72 Ainslie Ave, REID 2616.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Hi Everyone,

There certainly is an element of unrest in the city at present, with a lot more police around, since the release of a World Bank statement about the governance of **CAMBODIA**. I will keep my eyes and ears open and head down. AVI will evacuate us if there is any sign of unrest towards foreigners, so don't worry.

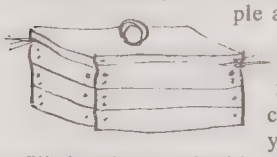
Off to Battanbong on Thursday to assist in buying 15 acres of landmine land for the first stage of our rice mill project. Pretty exciting hey! That area of Cambodia is very poor and is really suffering from the war and all the landmines there. We're travelling by a sort of bus and the road is as rough as can be and nearly all dirt. All depends on how full it is as to whether I will choose to sit on the roof with all the other gear, sometimes including livestock (much safer there really as it is easy to jump off). Whatever I decide to do it will be exciting.

Sandy,
PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA.
Email: sunshine_sandy63@hotmail.com

Hi To You All,

It is about time that I put pen to paper to congratulate all of you for giving so much pleasure, wisdom and enjoyment through this fantastic magazine. I tried to read it years ago with the help of a dictionary until I understood English. Many people have concrete, nifty ideas and suggestions.

Hurrah for Megg Miller. Love the 'Gumnut Gossip'. Some people ask for things they could find in op shops, especially fantastic cook books. I'd like to respond to Nevin Sweeny of St Claire. During the war carpenters made wooden boxes (to your measurements), they were tightly filled and pressed with straw. Mum had one made to fit two saucepans in. One usually had soup or stew, the other (hopefully) something sweet such as stewed fruit. You brought the dishes quickly to the boil then put them in the box and put the lid on. The lid was also tightly fitted with straw on the inside. This method of cooking was especially used during air raids if gas or water was off. Often unbelievable things ended up in the stews or soups, not much was available. It's fantastic though that so many old ideas can still be used now to help us and the environment. I still use many old recipes passed on from the not-so-easy times and they're still enjoyed.



Happy 2006. The daily news is not so good, with all the bad happenings. Still, we have to have hope and do our bit to make people happy.

Giselle,
WESTERNPORT.

Dear GRs,

I refer to Roberino's letter in GR 172 about the change in the public's acceptance of or indifference to bad and destructive behaviour and that as a nation we've lost our identity by copying another nation. The problem is a complex one and there are probably more questions than answers. A part explanation could be a comment I heard a year or so ago that does seem plausible. It's the fact that parents no longer influence their children all that much and that children are now mostly reared by corporations who advise young people what they must be seen wearing, using, eating, drinking, listening to and watching. To do otherwise will be seen as seriously uncool. To be uncool is devastating to modern youngsters, which is why they are easily gulled into accepting the next trend, however mindless or otherwise it might be, and very prone to peer group pressure on many issues.

Some sympathy must be extended to modern parents. It now needs two incomes to fund modern lifestyles and it must be quite stressful trying to juggle jobs, homes and parenting, which is why grandparents have been roped in to help out, although the ones I observe look quite tired to me. We need to rethink the 'cool' and not be manipulated by corporations, TV and ad agencies, a difficult prospect to be sure.

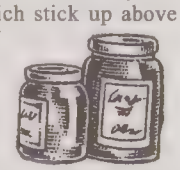
Another problem is the adoration of highly paid celebrities, by adults as well as children. Journalist Andrew Stevenson pointed out in an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* recently, that celebrities have kidnapped millions of apparently sane human beings and replaced their brains with marshmallow – indeed! What is truly weird is that celebrity opinion and endorsement is needed before the average person takes anything seriously these days. The phenomenon is something I find impossible to understand; to me they are just grossly overpaid actors and quite ordinary human beings, talented of course, in most cases, but not gods or goddesses to be worshipped, fawned or drooled over.

We are not only in danger of losing our identity as a nation, just as bad, we're losing our local identity. This is why so few seem interested in the locality. I'm a member of two environmental groups; we meet for two hours a month on bushcare and an occasional tree planting. It is so damn difficult to attract new members. In spite of local letterbox drops and chatting to passing folk during our activities, it makes no difference at all now. We used to get a few early on, but they never stayed. Nowadays, we don't waste our time. Even on really big events like Clean Up Australia Day, it's the same old group members forming the bulk of the cleaner-uppers. The modern attitude now seems to be: let someone else do it if they're that concerned. We are now in a society largely driven by acquisition and accumulation and it seems to be all that matters. So, you've got a largely disinterested complacency about what's going on in the locality, which brings us right back to the bad behaviour mentioned at the beginning. What to do about it? Frankly, I'm at a loss. I'm sure young folk are aware they are being manipulated, but cannot bring themselves to be seen as different from their mates. Being suckered in is preferable to being seen to be outside the loop.

Alan Stewart,
12 Weymouth Pl, ALEXANDRA HILLS 4161.

Hello People Everywhere,

Thanks to the clever compilers of this most enjoyable and informative magazine. For the past three weeks I have been rereading all my 21 copies of GR and making notes in the way one subscriber suggested: with stick-on labels, which stick up above the pages. In my case, that's an average of seven hints, tips or ideas for each one, mainly about gardening, cooking, recycling and craft work. I had thought it was about time I handed GR on to friends or family so they too could enjoy them, but it's no use – I can't pass them on yet. There are enough projects to keep me occupied till I'm 100 – that's in 22 years from now – so the others will just have to wait or take out their own subscription!



Must go now – have to plant more vegie seeds, peel the labels off jam jars, bake another healthy cake, stitch lace on that pillow for the new grandchild.

Monica Duckering,
48 Fitzroy Ave, RED CLIFFS 3496.

Anonymous letters will not be published. Please indicate if you would like personal details to be withheld.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Megg & Readers,

In a recent GR there was a letter from a reader who was writing about a recipe for seed cake. It intrigued me because it was quite different from the cake I had known. This was a plain cake with the addition of caraway seeds, an unusual and delicious flavour. I am sure Marjorie Bligh will know the one I mean. Some of these recipes have been handed down through families in different states and have a character all their own. My maternal grandmother (Irish) used to make '**PUFFTALOONS**', a plain scone cooked in the pan in hot butter. How delicious they were spread with golden syrup. Do I make your mouths water?

Mrs Barbara Jenkins,
19 Barnett Cres, BRIDPORT 7262.

Dear Megg & Mary,

Happy 2006 to everyone at GR! School holiday time means I can catch up on all my reading, I was two GRs behind! We've been in our new place just over 12 months now and are slowly doing bits and pieces. It had been vacant for about two years before we moved in and the land management prior to that left a bit to be desired. We are about to re-clear some of the previously cleared land, which has some regrowth causing erosion. We will then reseed it and do remedial erosion work and keep it maintained.

I have one child who finished school in 2005 who has opted to live locally rather than move to the city and has gained a vehicle mechanics apprenticeship. It's very fitting in the Year of the Outback with its current focus on youth. My daughter starts year 10 this year, so still has a little way to go.

Something I have seen no mention of in GR regarding Queensland are the **REGIONAL ECOSYSTEM AND REMNANT MAPS OF QUEENSLAND** under the Vegetation Management Act of 1999. All rural land is mapped and coloured. Which colour or colours cover your land determines what clearing you can do, even for house sites and fence lines. Sometimes the colouring is listed in the 'for sale' information and sometimes it isn't and the agents don't know. It pays to check for yourself. New updated maps were produced in December 2004 and can be viewed at: www.epa.qld.gov.au/remaps or ring 1800-999-367. You will usually need the Registered Plan Number of the property and its PIC identification number if you know it.

The other thing I haven't seen any information on is the **NLIS TRACEBACK SYSTEM**, which has been in for cattle for six months and started for sheep in January 2006. Anyone with more than one cow/beast needs to have a PIC number and needs to get special tags, which are placed in the animal's ear. The tags have a computer chip in them and the idea is that animals are traced as they are sold or moved from property to property. If there is a disease outbreak, they can be traced back to the place of birth and all properties in between, and disease control measures implemented. I'm not sure how the sheep tags are to be done. Your local DPI can help, or ring 13-25-23. This affects Queensland and I'm not sure what happens in other states. Life on the land gets more complicated by the day!

There have been some very inspiring success stories in the last two GRs showing people following their dreams. I read 'A Plot for the Future', GR 172, with interest. My parents planted a pine forest of some 200-plus trees in the early 1960s. Thirty-odd years later when they decided to harvest them no sawmills would take them. Why? Workplace Health and Safety! The trees were coming from private land and might have had nails in them. Nails wreck the saws and can injure the workers. So don't always bargain on being able to sell the timber. I'm not sure whether the fact that the trees were in the Brisbane City Council area had anything to do with it. Now the trees are covered by an Environmental Protection Order, even though they were planted, and can't be cut down at all.

I love the 'Chic, Cheap Gift Wrapping' in GR 172. Another idea I have used is to get sheets of waxed lunch wrap from the supermarket. Place dried flowers and leaves between them (don't use lumpy ones), place a tea towel under and on top of the two sheets and iron with the iron set on medium heat. The paper can be used as gift wrap or to make cards – insert a white piece of card inside to write on. I have also seen glitter, sequins, fabric scraps and coloured paper scraps placed in waxed paper and ironed. It's quick, individual and easy!

Now I have a question. I have an abundance of capsicum. So far I have frozen them, dried them and made pickled capsicum relish. Any other **RECIPES FOR CAPSICUM** use would be great.

Alan Stewart's idea of busing kids to farms for fruit picking is interesting. It would certainly help childhood obesity. Some parents would be aghast though – their children doing manual labour! One eight-year-old in my class last year described how she sat on her bed while her mother picked up all her clothes and toys from her bedroom floor. She proudly told me she gets $20 a week pocket money, but doesn't have to do any chores. Unfortunately, there are quite a few kids I teach like her. Many also have no respect for adults. This sort of behaviour reinforces this disrespect. Some parents don't want their kids to miss out, they want them to have everything, never to be disappointed, and for everything in life to be fun. Unfortunately, some things in life aren't fun and have to be done regardless, and kids today, in some instances, aren't learning this.

Karen Long,
PO Box 46, MILES 4415.

Dear Grass Roots,

I would like to know where I can buy **FRESH HORSERADISH** or the crowns to grow it myself.

Nola Ann,
PO Box 7397, BUNDALL 4217.

Dear Megg, Mary & Co,

We have learnt so much from reading *Grass Roots* and have **TRIED MANY OF THE SUGGESTIONS** submitted by various writers. We've made our own soap, utilised an old curtain to make a demountable window shade, recycled the old ironing board into a potting table. We've tried many of the recipes. We candied, crystallised and glacéd fruit, we have had new gates made by a GR contact. We've spread 'the word' and other friends have become devotees and disciples. We share our copy with other family members and every article on hens is eagerly read by Margery, who is our resident 'chook lady'. Enough for tonight, thank you again *Grass Roots.*

Margaret Robson,
LEONGATHA 3953.

Dear Mary,

The little heritage church I attend was built in Albion Park in 1875 from local sandstone and will in future need renovations. This area is fast developing, was rural with dairy farms, but now sadly is converting to suburban homes. Because it was rural, expert cooks are in abundance. As a fundraiser we have produced a cookery book containing dozens of tried and tested recipes; many are the sort of traditional fare often requested in GR. The book is for sale for $10, including postage, and can be obtained from: The Secretary, All Saints Anglican Church, Albion Park 2527.

Roy Banks,
81 Parkes St, OAK FLATS 2529.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GR,

I have read the magazine for several years and yearn for the GR lifestyle. I am married with two small children and have had **FIBROMYALGIA** for many years. I have good days and bad, with no indication of what really flares me up, though I know stress is a big part. I would love to correspond with other sufferers, so that we don't feel all alone, and maybe swap options for treatment etc. My four-year-old suffers from asthma and has been on preventative medication since two years. Unfortunately, my knowledge is limited on asthma, and I'm not real happy about her being on steroid-based medication long term from such an early age. We long for an alternative lifestyle, but basically don't know where to start.

I considered WWOOFing, but because of my illness was unsure if I could be of use to others. Is there any family who resides on a few acres plus, who would be interested in establishing a friendship so that we could discuss how you went about obtaining land, building homes, planting self-sufficiency crops etc? I hope that by living this way our illnesses may be eliminated or at least under better control. I would love for my children to be raised in a simpler environment.

Angela Beasley,
29 Blackbutt Way, BARRACK HEIGHTS 2528.
Email: beasleysa@dodo.com.au

A healthy well-balanced diet and moderate exercise, without overdoing it, are important in managing fibromyalgia. Chiropractic treatment might help, but will not cure. Regular massage almost certainly will be beneficial, though the masseur should be cautioned not to apply too much pressure as this can cause a pain flare-up. Know your limits and don't push yourself to do too much – easier said than done. Think very deeply about the constant physical work involved in a self-sufficient lifestyle on the land; it could have long-term negative consequences. A more achievable option could be a home on a quarter-acre block in a country town. This would give you space to grow chemical-free food in a clean environment. Country towns are usually full of friendly, supportive folk too. Good luck; let us know what you decide and how it works out.

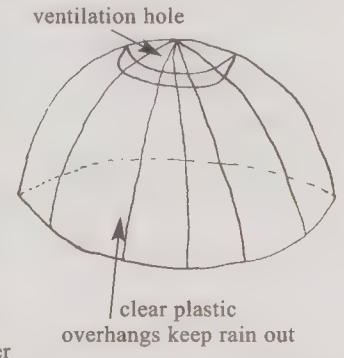
Dear GR,

Chocolate is a much maligned confection that is now being regarded in a more rational light. The seeds of the cacao tree are roasted and ground and the paste is mixed with sugar and vanilla. It's the sugar that is the harmful component, but the cacao is now thought to have many beneficial chemicals, hence the happy feeling after eating some. A hot chocolate drink before bedtime has always been a good relaxant ensuring a good night's sleep.

'Porridge Patter' in GR 168 was a good article on an old Scottish staple food that is much ignored these days. Besides being something to stick to your ribs, as the Scots will tell you, it is far healthier than many modern breakfast foods full of sugar, which should be avoided, or at least reduced, in the interests of good health. Being extremely lazy, I make a batch of porridge in a casserole pot that lasts me a week if kept in the fridge with a cover on it. A spoonful or two with fruit muesli, amaranth and soy milk is a sustaining breakfast, which I think has helped me lower my cholesterol. My doctor is impressed. My blood pressure is now normal again too, thus fewer headaches, which is nice. I also use porridge in vegie stews, omelettes and many other basic dishes. It's cheap and widely available and comes as normal or quick oats, where the oats are finely chopped, which allows moisture to soften it more quickly.

Anyone building a house these days would be well advised to incorporate a few simple items to guard against furious winds. **CYCLONE-PROOFING** is common practice throughout the equatorial regions of the Pacific Islands and there are degrees of protection that you can adopt. Roller shutters that can be pulled down over windows to stop flying debris from breaking windows is the most extreme protection, but simple things like metal straps and rods that are firmly fixed between floor and roof at one-metre spacing in walls stops roofs flying off in high winds and stabilises walls in alternative constructions such as strawbale and newspaper wall houses and is easily incorporated during building. Larger gutters and downpipes are cheap insurance against tropical-type downpours.

The humpy, a traditional building method in Africa, could be useful for Australians living on acreage. Simple in design and erection, this cheap shelter is thousands of years old. Using nothing more than mud and green saplings that will easily bend, even a child could build it. If termites are a problem in your area, you could substitute PVC pipe for the timber element. The frame is made along the lines of an upturned basket, then covered with mud and waterproofed with a render of mud and cattle dung. You could substitute cement for the dung. Raising the floor slightly would help keep water out and a concrete floor would improve it further and give the structure more rigidity. A hemispheric or igloo shape is self-supporting and a round area at the apex could be left unmudded, allowing for ventilation and light with a clear plastic cover. An option is to forget the mud and cover with shadecloth for a gazebo-humpy with lots of uses.



Roberino,
PO Box 359, WOOLGOOLGA 2456.

Dear GR Readers,

Many years ago I read in a *Grass Roots* magazine about a lady who dug up tonnes of old pottery along the Yarra banks. She covered her entire yard mosaic style. I have collected similar items from around our town's river banks and would like to hear from anyone who's created mosaic stepping stones using broken china and learn how to go about it; maybe it's known to GR readers as **CRAZY PAVING**.

I'd also be grateful for someone to tell me how to remove **TEA BAG STAINS** from a lace tablecloth; I've washed and soaked to no avail. Thanks.

Steve,
Email: olympic1920@hotmail.com

There was an article on a DIY mosaic path in GR 166. Have you tried soaking in a borax/water solution, or patting a borax/water paste into the stained area? Good luck. Any readers with other suggestions?

To avoid unwelcome approaches writers may indicate any personal details they wish to be withheld. Don't forget to put preferred contact details at the *bottom* of your letter. Letters are accepted and edited at the discretion of the publishers.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GRs,

My sister-in-law gave me a subscription for Christmas. I have been an itinerant reader of nearly 30 years and have had about 10 properties. I am 47 and have been a gardener all my life. I've also lived in south-east Queensland all my life, as did all my grandparents and even some great grandparents. I was a carpenter and alternative builder for 25 years. Don't want to build anymore as I now loathe the consumerism of building.

Presently, I have 6.5 acres here at **EUMUNDI**, near where my grandfather was a banana farmer (he died long before I was born) and my father was a science teacher (also long dead). We have a high rainfall here, about 1200 millimetres. Most of it comes early in the year and then we have a dry winter and usually a very dry spring and early summer. The soil here is very poor compacted pure clay and, with the adverse climate, I have now abandoned my vegetable garden after seven years of hard work and am landscaping that area before I (hopefully) move from here to cooler climes.

I have planted hundreds of trees here, both native and non-native, and also hundreds of ornamental shrubs. The weed problem on this degraded farmland is monumental, so things have to be robust to survive. I must have used every method over the years to keep plants alive and then, if lucky, get them to grow. I've used any type of water along the way: creek water, dam water, bore water, tank water and town water.

I have a fully restored 1932 Alston windmill that recycles dirty road runoff water via a system of 14 ponds to clean it up. Then I have an electric and petrol pump set up on the main lagoon. I don't actually do much **IRRIGATION** now as almost all the property is established, so generally I only pump to water my nursery areas, pot plants, hanging baskets and to fill fountains and aquariums around the house when needed. I also have a swimming pool (I hate), which is at least a source of fairly clean fire-fighting water.

Hoses I find are inefficient, wasteful ways to water plants to get established and fixed irrigation is expensive and prone to damage and change of mind in the establishment phase of gardening. So I place empty 200-litre drums in strategic positions and then bucket from these. If you only have a small flow from your hose, it is much more time efficient to time how long it takes to fill and do something else while you wait for it to fill. You are also putting on a measured amount each time: half a bucket for a small plant, whole bucket or two for a large one.

I have found after many years of trial that most types of fiddly irrigation are useless in rural situations. Timers, computers etc I have also found to be unreliable. I think that unless you have electricity at your pump a 5.5 horsepower petrol fire-fighter pump is the best bet. Get a new one to start with and it should do you good service if you keep it out of the flood zone, undercover and secure from thieves. When it won't go, change the spark plug for a nice new one. If that doesn't work, disconnect it and take it in for a service at the motor shop.

One of these pumps will run about five garden hoses very well. Bigger hoses are more efficient if you can afford them, but any hose will do. There's no need for a timer and no worry about turning it off when you go away; no need to worry about small leaks in hoses either – you just put as much fuel in the tank as you like and when it runs out the pump stops and so do the leaks. You also don't have to worry about getting a whopping electricity bill you haven't been counting on.

Movable sprinklers are best and the heavier the droplet size the better as this helps cut down wind drift and gets the water into the soil more quickly. Just put a straight-sided container in the area to measure how much sprinkler rainfall you are getting. It takes about 24 millimetres of rain to wet the top 30 centimetres. Any kind of sprinkler will do – round, square, rectangular. Click-on fittings make it easy to chop and change. Just wind up hoses when you want to mow, plough or dig. I also have some homemade tripod sprinkler stands, easily made from a few old star pickets, cheap black riser pipes and cheap heavy-duty sprinkler heads from a hardware or irrigation shop. These are good because they are heavy enough not to fall over, easy to see (when mowing etc) easy to move and robust.

Filters can also be a critical part of any system if you have dirty water from a dam with weeds, mud, leaves and other detritus. Start at the foot valve in the dam. I fold up a bit of 13-millimetre square weldmesh into a cage and wrap this in shadecloth and clip or tie it on. Maybe use more than one thickness of cloth and try to make it fairly flat and smooth outside so you can scrape off muck occasionally. Before I used this system I had several block-ups a day (these always happen when the dam is lowest and you need to water most). Now I haven't cleaned mine for months. All sorts of inline filters are a pain, but store-bought ones can be made better and easier to clean if you remove the screen and replace it with a scrunched-up strip of shadecloth. Shadecloth is unbreakable and much easier to clean. Just pull out, whack it against a tree a few times and stuff it back in. It's easy to make an inline filter any size from PVC plumbing pipe with screw-on caps and pipe fittings.

Keith Rose,
EUMUNDI 4562.

Dear GRs,

Once upon a time I thought I'd never survive if not living in the city, but things changed and my husband, child and myself were lucky enough to buy a country bush property near the beach. Many people told us we'd regret moving far from the madding crowd and couldn't understand how we'd hold down our jobs and take care of the land.

Well I am here to say that it can be done; we are living proof. I do not miss pubs and clubs, can't be bothered going shopping in the city any more, and I just love waking up to the sound of . . . silence and birdsong. The rain is so much more attractive in the country, the air so pure, just looking out of the window puts colour into our cheeks. Our family lives by the seasons, we sleep when it gets dark and wake at first light. We compost, grow our own food, have fresh eggs, both duck and chicken, and build using recycled materials. Our child is flourishing too, growing up knowing that milk comes from a cow, that spiders and beetles are an important part of our ecosystem, and that birds are precious and beautiful. She can climb a tree, swing like a monkey and run around all day long, just as a child ought to.

Despite many people's misgivings, our lives have continued to improve each and every day. The jobs that everyone said we'd never deal with are running rampant. My husband works internationally in the music business; all his work is conducted via email and telephone, and when he has to go overseas he hops on a plane. I run my own ever-growing business from home, communicating via computer. Never has the need to live in a city been less. Neither my husband nor I miss Los Angeles, where we used to live; we tell everyone 'there is life outside the smog'.

We are still a young couple and are both thankful to have taken our sea change earlier rather than later. I urge anyone who is nervous about taking the step to do it; you'll never look back. These days my motto is: if life begins at 40, then I can't be bothered waiting.

Bright blessings to all and please feel free to visit me at my website.

Severina Tadeus,
Email: info@gravellybeach.com
Website: www.gravellybeach.com

Grass Trees Forever

by Jose Robinson, Noosaville, Qld.

The xanthorrhoea or grass tree has always fascinated me. I've grown the plants in my various gardens, photographed them many times, painted them in oils and watercolours, used their silhouette in screen printing and made baskets from their fronds.

The native bees seem to delight in their flower spike for at least the first two weeks after its appearance. Masses of tiny white flowers on a tall spear-like extrusion seem to be a delight for the tiny, stingless native bees.

The trunk of the grass tree is extremely slow growing. Some in bushfire areas have been burnt black many times over the years, but it doesn't seem to permanently affect their growth too much. Actually, it might stimulate growth. Because of the shellac-like resin substance in the trunk, and the thick bundles of dead fronds that usually hang on underneath the younger fronds, seemingly forever, they burn very hot in bushfires. However, they appear to be stimulated by the burning, being one of the first plants to bounce back with new growth after the fire.

Of course, it is illegal to extract native grass trees from any bushland area without a licence, with a substantial fine the result of breaking this law.

Although there are 28 species of grass trees throughout Australia, it is interesting to note they grow equally as well in freezing cold areas such as Stanthorpe, Queensland, on the Darling Downs, where winter temperatures can plunge below zero, as they do in the coastal tropics. They don't appear to appreciate good soil, as they frequently occur naturally in really poor soil, either rocky or sandy. However, they do like good drainage.

Jose at the foot of a grass tree.

On a recent outing I observed some excellent quite tall specimens at a native nursery with a price tag of several hundred dollars each, so they do not come cheap.

The root system of the grass tree is very shallow and spreads over an area in proportion to the size of the trunk. A grass tree might only grow about 15 to 30 centimetres in 30 or 40 years. Some coastal species never develop trunks and look for all the world just like a clump of grass. As the fronds go brown and die, they hang onto the trunk and form the characteristic grass 'skirt'.

In earlier times, grass trees were harvested for their resin, which was sought after by European instrument makers. The resin made great stain for timber. The extraction, of course, would kill the grass tree, which was cut down, split open and laid on a sheet of metal covering a hot fire, allowing the resin to pour out. These days we have more respect for this Australian icon and it is protected.

The biggest threat to grass trees these days is the clearing of land for development. This can lead to the demise of many grass trees if not saved and transplanted by Landcare organisations. Lets hope this remarkable and unique species will live on forever.

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Baby On A Budget

by Jane 'Many Leaves' Lawrance, Babinda, Qld.

It's amazing how little money you need for baby necessities. By shopping around and asking friends and family, we have plenty for little Emma.

CLOTH NAPPIES

Being *Grass Roots* folk, we decided upon using cloth nappies and purchased four dozen. This gives us a comfort margin that allows for our frequent wet weather and for Emma's increasing output as she grows.

During the day a soft paper towel liner to catch poo makes the nappy easier to wash. Used nappies are soaked in our large (70-litre) laundry tub, half-filled with plain cold water and out of Emma's reach. Every other day we wash the nappies in the twin tub washing machine (run on alternative energy) with a small handful of grated, homemade soap (sun-dried and powdered) in cold water. One tub takes 10 nappies at a time with two four-minute cycles each and two rinse cycles. The soap is extremely frothy in cold water, lasting the second load, and the third for our clothes – ideal water usage on precious tank water. The cold rinsing water has about a cup of white vinegar added.

After rinsing, the nappies are dried outside, weather permitting, in the sun and wind. As we live in the wettest town in Australia, it's a challenge to dry the nappies in the wet season; hanging them above the wood stove outside, or on the new shelving inside works well.

I'm sure the quality of cloth nappies has dropped over the years. In earlier *Grass Roots* editions I've read, mothers seem to have coped with a couple of dozen nappies for two babies. Now, the nappies soon wear thin, ending up as useful rags.

Overnight, Emma has a muslin liner under the nappy to protect her skin, and a fluffy on the outside to protect the bed sheets. Under the sheet, there's a fluffy Enviro underblanket to protect the cot mattress. We tried the rubber sheet, but it was too hot and sweaty for our climate.

SKIN CARE

We don't walk down the baby aisle in the supermarket for chemical wipes or petroleum-based creams, but rely mainly on plain water, homemade soap, and tissues or toilet roll for bottom wipes. Before we head for the gardens I rub some coconut oil on Emma's bare bits: face, hands and head. She wears socks, sandals and lightweight cotton clothes that cover her arms and legs. Of course, it's very hard to keep a sun hat on, but she's learning. On the occasions Emma has a very wet nappy overnight, we dab on colloidal silver, allow it to dry, then lightly powder with cornflour. In the evening, after a playful bath, a massage with coconut oil, especially on the bum, helps to relieve any redness by morning. Any cuts and grazes are regularly dabbed with colloidal silver.

Bathtime

We soap Emma first on an offcut of nonslip matting placed on the drainer, then move her into the baby bath, which has had a couple of teaspoons of cider vinegar added to the water to neutralise and clean off residual soap and restore correct skin pH; it also prevents pain from soap in the eyes.

It's been nearly 15 years since I've purchased any commercial cleaning products as I make my own plain, sand and pumice soap. Emma hasn't had any skin reactions at all from the homemade soap, right from newborn.

A bucket makes a fun splash pool.

Cardboard boxes are inexpensive and can be used in so many different ways by kids.

A homegrown loofah sponge, plastic kitchen cups, measures and large corks are all great fun in the water.

TOYS

Isn't it interesting that it's usually the cardboard box and wrappings toys come in that young children prefer to play with? Emma loves the simple things in life. I've stuffed loud scrunchy bags and large wooden beads into material bags, sewn up and tied with a bright ribbon. Her little fingers love exploring the textures. A lot of gratefully adopted used toys take on a new lease of life.

Many earlier *Grass Roots* magazines are great sources of fun and easy learning, especially simple crafty toys like making bubble pipes from citrus halves. You'll also find many little stories and games to amuse children of all ages in old GRs. A lot of the time Emma finds her own fun outside in the garden.

Large cardboard boxes are cheap, exciting houses for Emma. We cut a door and some windows and throw some toys inside and play peek-a-boo. Within her reach are many safe plastic containers, measuring scoops, plates, kiddies' cups and cutlery with which to imitate Mum and Dad. She loves feeding us invisible food and drink.

PRELOVED GOODIES

Clothes

I can't see the point of new clothes when babies grow so fast. A visit to the local op shop for clothes, toys and other necessities is a must for every mum. Some clothes just need a new bit of elastic, a quick sew or a wash. Being in the tropics, I look for lightweight cotton for sun and insect protection. Of course, grandparents' baby clothes must be worn and photographed, however inappropriate! We've been given bags of baby clothes from mums who've been there and done that.

Equipment

Trekking around the op shops in Cairns has been worthwhile for us. We spent $25 on a clip-on high chair, $25 on a fold-up pram, $2 on a telescopic stroller, and $5 on assorted play equipment. The cot and portacot came from friends.

You don't need to spend a fortune on a new baby; ingenuity, commonsense and a commitment to reduce, reuse and recycle enable you to provide for your bub's needs without too much strain on the budget.

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KIDS PAGE

DIARY KEEPING

A diary or journal is a book in which to write entries arranged by date. The name comes from the Latin word *diarium*, which means daily allowance. It can be used for recording planned activities in advance so that you remember when to do them, or for reporting or reflecting on things that have happened. The oldest surviving diaries come from East Asian cultures, these are the pillow books of Japanese court ladies and Asian travel journals. Diaries can be purpose-made books or plain blank notebooks. Most commonly, diaries are used by people to describe their feelings, thoughts and experiences, but there are various other popular types of diary themes.

TYPES OF DIARIES

Personal Diary: daily feelings, thoughts and experiences are described and reflected upon.

Travel Diary: descriptions of places visited, things seen and experienced are often accompanied by photographs and other mementos.

Learning/Training Diary: reports on progress and knowledge or skill accomplished are kept.

Dream Diary: recalled dreams are described and their meaning reflected upon.

Nature Diary: descriptions of the natural world with your senses on alert, often accompanied by drawings of things discovered.

FAMOUS DIARIES

Many famous people have had their diaries published. They often give interesting insights and perspectives on history and culture - queens and kings, artists, musicians and sportspeople often keep diaries. Sometimes an ordinary individual writes a diary and becomes famous for it. A great example of this is the diary of a 13-year-old German girl called Anne Frank. She wrote about her time of hiding from the Nazis during World War II. See if this and any other interesting diaries by young people are kept by your library.

'*Painting is just another way of keeping a diary.*' - Pablo Picasso

'*I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train.*' - Oscar Wilde

YOUR OWN TIME CAPSULE DIARY BOX

Take time out to make a special piece of personal history. Put it away somewhere safe and you will be able to see changes in yourself when you look back.

You will need:

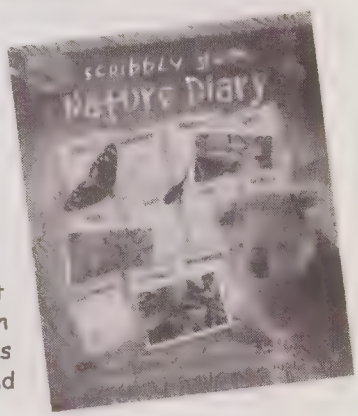
- ★ a small box or jar
- ★ paper and pens

Cut a piece of paper to fit on one side of the box or jar and draw a self-portrait on it. Write the date.

Cut up numerous strips of paper. On each strip describe a particular aspect of yourself - you can use the following ideas or make up your own:

- ★ favourite hobbies
- ★ what you like/dislike about school
- ★ five things that make you happy
- ★ favourite season
- ★ the funniest thing you've ever done
- ★ your special baby toy
- ★ favourite meal
- ★ favourite place
- ★ favourite book character
- ★ what you have learnt about being a friend
- ★ what you like to daydream about . . .

BOOK REVIEW
Scribbly Gum Nature Diary



By Abigail Thomas

This is a really well laid-out month-by-month diary based on observations about various interesting Australian plants and animals.

Information about where to find certain happenings, when and what to look for is accompanied by beautiful photography.

It is sure to inspire enthusiasm for adventures outside, especially for upper primary kids.

P/b, 56pp, ABC Books, Ultimo Centre, 700 Harris Street, Ultimo 2007. Ph: 02-8333-3999. RRP: $21.95.

IN THE KITCHEN

Carrots are one of the healthiest and best-loved vegies, always available and full of vitamin A. Here are some fun ways to use up your carrot harvest.

CARROT & SAFFRON SOUP

250 g carrots, grated
1 stalk celery, finely chopped
250 g leeks, washed, sliced finely
30 g butter
¼ tsp saffron strands
1½ cups water
½ cup white wine
salt and black pepper to taste
1½ cups milk
1 cup cream

Melt butter in a heavy based saucepan, add leeks and stir to coat with butter, then turn heat down to low. Cover pan and sweat leeks for about 20 minutes, until soft but not brown. Add carrots and celery, stir well, cover and cook for a further 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, soak saffron in 2 tbsp hot water then add to vegetables in pan. Add water, wine, salt and pepper.

Cook, covered, for 20 minutes or until carrots are very tender. Add milk and cream and heat through without boiling. Serves 4.

CARROT & DILL ROSTI

60 ml light sour cream
1 tsp ground cumin
1 tbsp chopped fresh dill
5 med carrots, grated
1 egg, lightly beaten
1 egg white, lightly beaten
50 g plain flour

Combine sour cream, cumin and dill in a small bowl. Combine carrot, egg, egg white and flour in a large bowl. Cook ¼-cups of carrot mix, in batches, in a heated, oiled saucepan, until rostis are browned on both sides. Serve with sour cream mixture.

SPICY CARROT SALAD

4 lge carrots
1 clove garlic, crushed
½ tsp sweet paprika
½ tsp ground cumin
1 red chilli, seeded and chopped
2 tbsp lemon juice
2 tsp olive oil
¼ tsp sugar
2 tbsp fresh coriander leaves

Cut carrots into long thin strips. Cook until just tender. Combine garlic, paprika, cumin, chilli, juice, oil and sugar in a jar, shake well. Combine carrots with dressing and coriander in a large bowl while hot, mix gently. Serve cool or warm.

CARROT DIP

5 med carrots, coarsely chopped
1 tbsp olive oil
1 clove garlic, crushed
½ tsp ground cumin
2 tsp lemon juice
⅓ cup yogurt

Steam chopped carrots until tender, then drain. Heat olive oil in large frying pan and cook garlic and cumin, stirring, until fragrant. Stir in carrot and lemon juice, cook, stirring, until combined. Remove from heat and cool for 10 minutes. Blend or process carrot mixture and yogurt until just smooth.

CARROT & ZUCCHINI FRITTERS

2 carrots, grated
2 zucchinis, grated
2 onion, sliced
½ sweet potato, grated
2 tsp paprika
1 tsp ground ginger
1 tsp ground cinnamon
4 eggs
2 tbsp milk

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and mix well. Place small balls into a large, lightly greased frying pan over a high heat. Cook until golden brown, then turn and cook other side until golden, about 2 minutes each side. Serves 4.

CLASSIC CARROT CAKE

150 g plain flour
120 g wholemeal plain flour
2 tsp bicarb soda
1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp ground nutmeg
250 g firmly packed brown sugar
2 med carrots, coarsely grated
100 g walnuts, roughly chopped
3 eggs
250 ml olive oil
160 g cream cheese
75 g icing sugar
finely grated rind of 1 orange

Preheat oven to 180° C. Brush a square 20 cm cake tin with oil to grease then line with nonstick baking paper.

Sift together plain flour, wholemeal flour, bicarb soda, baking powder and nutmeg into a large bowl. Return bran to the flour. Add brown sugar, grated carrots and walnuts and mix well.

Combine eggs and oil in a medium bowl and use a hand whisk until pale. Add to dry ingredients and fold in until just combined. Spoon cake mixture into tin and bake in a preheated oven for 35 minutes or until a skewer inserted comes out clean. Stand in pan for 10 minutes before turning onto wire rack to cool completely.

To make icing, place cream cheese, icing sugar and orange rind in the bowl of a food processor and process until smooth. Spread over the cooled cake and serve cut into slices.

SPICED CARROT BISCUITS

125 g butter
¼ cup icing sugar
¼ cup grated carrot, firmly packed
185 g plain flour
½ tsp cinnamon
1 tsp mixed spice
75 g caster sugar
½ tsp mixed spice, extra

Grease oven trays. Cream butter and icing sugar in small bowl with electric mixer until fluffy. Stir in carrot, sifted flour, cinnamon and spice. Roll rounded teaspoons of mixture into balls, toss in combined sugar and extra spice. Place on trays, flatten with a fork, bake at 180° C for about 20 minutes or until lightly browned, cool on trays for 5 minutes only, then place on a wire rack to cool completely.

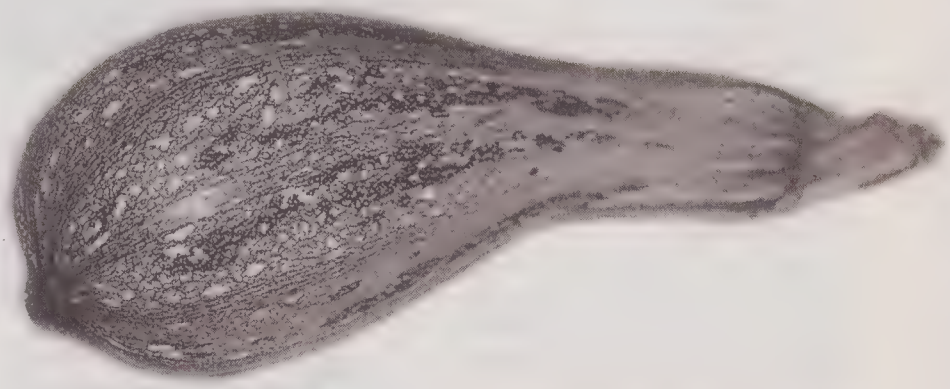
A Zest for Zucchini

by Sandra Lynn Evans, Traralgon, Vic.

I didn't eat zucchini until I was an adult. During my middle-class, Anglo-Saxon childhood the family was usually served meat and three different coloured vegies: potato, carrots or pumpkin, and peas or beans. In season, the menu was varied with cabbage and cauliflower. Winter was always warmed with a stew of gravy beef, potato, carrot and peas, with onions for flavour. A couple of times a friend gave Mum a marrow, about 60 centimetres long and a tasteless, mushy mess when cooked in the same fashion as the other vegies. We kids screwed up our noses and begged not to eat it, but there was a no-waste policy in our home and everything on the plate had to be eaten. Ethnic cooking exploded onto our table in the late 1960s with 'ki-si-min' or chop suey, recipes that were far removed from their Asian origins, but considered very daring in country Victoria!

I first encountered zucchinis in the boxes of vegie scraps we would cadge from the local greengrocer for our assortment of chooks, ducks, guinea pigs and goats when my children were young, and on occasional meals out, when there would be a soggy, uninspiring piece or two on the plate. Still not sure what I would do with it, I invested in a packet of seeds the following spring. At least our growing menagerie would ensure they wouldn't be wasted.

We were thrilled when, only six weeks after planting, tiny cigar-shaped zucchinis appeared on our lush bushes, and were completely amazed at the speed with which they grew. That first year the animals ate the majority of our zucchinis; I just didn't know what to do with them. Not realising how prolific these plants were, I had planted row after row and we soon had mounds of them. We acquired a house cow and soon found a bucket of sliced zucchinis was just as effective as a bundle of hay for keeping her quiet during milking. We gave them away, sold them on my market stall and at the gate and still they kept coming.



The following year I didn't put in quite as many plants, but there still seemed to be another bucket of zucchinis every day. Go away for the day, miss a day's picking and there were the dreaded marrows again. Perfect for the cow!

My four kids were still not enamoured of zucchini in any shape, so over the next few years I learnt to be very creative with this versatile vegie. My husband had left us and money was scarce. I found that many meals could be extended with zucchini. Grated and added to stews, bolognaise sauce, curries and more it was a boost to our budget. Then I found a recipe for zucchini chocolate cake. What a dilemma for the kids – they loved chocolate cake, but those green bits? They soon found it made no difference to the taste and they certainly weren't going to pass up chocolate cake. Mum was happy; it was easy on the budget and another way to get kids to eat vegies.

I still plant way too many zucchinis every year, forget to pick them and end up with huge piles threatening to take over the kitchen, but my list of recipes has grown considerably and throughout the harvest there is hardly a day when one meal doesn't contain zucchini in some form. I love them grilled, barbecued or lightly sautéed, add them to soups and casseroles, and they are delicious sliced on top of pizza. I also use them in cakes, biscuits, muffins and scones. I took a plate of zucchini date loaf to a function and the plate was emptied in minutes. Of course, I tell myself that because it's all so healthy I can indulge in an extra piece! The following are just a few of the recipes I make regularly.

ZUCCHINI & OATMEAL MUFFINS

50 g butter or margarine
¼ cup sugar
1 egg
2 tbsp golden syrup
1 cup SR flour
1 cup instant oats
1 cup sultanas (or mixed dried fruit)
1 cup grated zucchini
1 tsp bicarb soda
½ cup skim milk, warmed

Cream butter and sugar. Mix in egg and golden syrup. Then add flour, oats, sultanas and zucchini. Add bicarb to warmed milk and stir into mixture. Spoon into muffin tins and bake in a moderate oven for 20 minutes. Makes 12.

ZUCCHINI DATE LOAF

1 cup boiling water
1 cup chopped dates
½ cup walnuts
1 tbsp butter or margarine
1 tbsp sugar
1 tsp bicarb soda
1½ cups SR flour
1 cup grated zucchini

Pour one cup of boiling water over dates, walnuts, butter, sugar and bicarb

soda and allow to cool. Mix in flour and zucchini. Bake in a lightly greased loaf tin for approximately one hour in a moderate oven.

ZUCCHINI FRUIT SQUARES

50 g butter or margarine
½ cup sugar
1 egg
½ tsp vanilla essence
2 tbsp golden syrup
2 tbsp coconut
1 cup mixed dried fruit
1 cup grated zucchini
1½ cups SR flour
2 tbsp skim milk

Cream butter and sugar. Add egg and vanilla and beat well. Stir in golden syrup, coconut, fruit and zucchini. Sift flour and fold into mixture alternately with milk.

Put mixture into a greased lamington tin and bake in a moderate oven for 40 minutes. Ice with lemon icing and cut into squares.

SAUSAGE & ZUCCHINI PINWHEELS

2 cups SR flour
½ cup cream
1 cup milk

Mix together to make a moist dough. Roll out in a rectangular shape, about 1½ cm thick.

250 g sausage mince
1½ cups grated zucchini

Mix together sausage mince and zucchini and season to taste. Spread carefully over dough and roll up like a Swiss roll. Cut into 3 cm slices and bake in a moderately hot oven for 25 – 30 minutes or until golden brown. Delicious with homemade tomato sauce or chutney.

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Onions And Olives

Pickled onions are an old favourite and marinated olives a new one. Try these simple and tasty recipes.

PICKLED ONIONS

2 kg pickling onions
1 cup sea salt
3 cups white vinegar
2 cups water
1 tsp chopped ginger
6 dried chillies
6 cloves
2 tsp mustard seeds
1 tbsp peppercorns

Place the onions in a bowl and cover with boiling water to make them easy to peel. Allow to stand for an hour. Peel the onions, leaving the base intact to hold them together. Return the onions to the bowl, cover with water and add the salt. Cover with a tea towel and set aside for 24 hours.

Drain the onions. Place the vinegar, 2 cups of water and the spices in a nonaluminum saucepan and bring to the boil. Simmer for 5 minutes, then allow to cool. Pack the onions into sterilised jars and pour the vinegar over. Seal and store for about 2 weeks before eating.

MARINATED OLIVES

1.5 kg fresh green olives
150 g salt
2 lt water

Marinade 1

4 rosemary sprigs
1 lemon
4 cloves garlic, sliced thinly
olive oil to cover

Marinade 2

2 tsp chilli flakes
2 tbsp oregano leaves
1 dried bay leaf
2 cloves garlic, sliced
olive oil to cover

Marinade 3

2 tsp pink peppercorns, crushed
1 tsp coriander seeds
2 tsp toasted fennel seeds, crushed lightly
4 sprigs thyme
olive oil to cover

Bruise olives with the side of a heavy bladed knife. Place in large sterilised pickling jars to two-thirds full. Cover the olives with fresh cold water. Fill small plastic bags with water and place on top of the olives to keep them submerged, then seal jars. Place in a cool, dark place for 6 days, changing the water every day as scum and other impurities will appear on the surface.

Combine salt and water over a low heat until salt just dissolves; cool and pour over drained olives. Seal jars and store in cool dark place for 5 weeks.

Remove from brine and marinate in marinade of your choice. Makes 3 bottles. Enjoy.

A Pickle Of Walnuts

by Jane Smith, Kilsyth, Vic.

'How do you pickle green walnuts?', asked a correspondent in GR 169. I had no trouble remembering in which notebook I wrote about walnuts nearly 40 years ago. It became the first of an ongoing series of notebooks in which I kept possibly useful ideas and handy hints told to me over the years. Sharing them in GR ensures these gems of information will never be lost.

Having been given a bucketful of green and still soft-centred walnuts at that time by a friend who had a beautiful walnut tree growing in her backyard, there was no way I'd waste such a windfall. It was a bit of an adventure too, because I'd never even seen green walnuts before and had no idea what to do with them.

But, by what Carl Jung called synchronicity, lying on the table at home was a letter that contained an English friend's recipe for pickling green walnuts, something I'd never expected to do. I'd kept the letter and copied down the recipe because, who knows, some day somebody might want to know.

I did better than that though, I followed the recipe and ended up with jars of pickled green walnuts that turned black and interesting and, after the impatient waiting time of three months for proper maturation, became a tasty treat to add to meat or cheese, sandwiches and salads. The idea is to remove some from the jar and slice thinly before serving, although they can be served whole like black olives.

TO PICKLE GREEN WALNUTS

Prick the freshly picked green walnuts all over. I used about 100 in this recipe. (The green walnut when sliced at this stage is creamy-green in the middle, no hard nut yet having formed.) Place the pricked walnuts in brine made in a plastic bucket.

Brine

Place walnuts in a bucket and just cover with cold water. To every two litres of water, add six level tablespoons of salt and stir. Change the brine every three days and stir the bucket contents often. After nine days, take the walnuts out and drain them. Spread them out on old linen (an old sheet is fine), to dry in the sun until they go black. Pack the dried walnuts into presterilised screw-top jars and make the pickling vinegar.

Pickling Vinegar

2 lt malt or cider vinegar

2 level tbsp whole black pepper

3 level tbsp ginger powder or chopped ginger

3 level tbsp cloves

2 level tbsp mustard seed

Place all ingredients in a large saucepan. Bring to boil and boil for about 10 minutes. Strain, then pour over the walnuts in the jars to cover. Screw on the lids loosely, tighten when cold. If the jars are kept standing in hot water, they won't crack when filled with hot vinegar. Keep for three months, if you can wait that long, and enjoy.

NOTEBOOK JOTTINGS

I recorded some other interesting snippets of information about walnuts, some of them incomplete and I hope to draw input from GR readers with closer connections with walnut trees.

In an English magazine about 40 years ago or earlier I came across information on uses for green, unripe walnuts, said to be rich in vitamin C, and I made notes. One note says that green walnuts can be boiled in syrup and stored in jars. Why oh why didn't I write more, such as how?

And then there's a note that an infusion of walnut leaves mixed with an equal quantity of the dried bark is recommended in wineglassful doses four times a day for sufferers from shingles or eczema, especially the latter. Why did they assume that everybody knew how much a wineglassful was? How big is a wine glass? Is there a standard size?

The information went on to say that 'the proportion should be an ounce (30 grams) of the dried bark and leaves to a pint (600 millilitres) of boiling water. The same infusion may be used to bathe skin eruptions'. Well, I leave that to others to comment on, I never tried it, but adding it to the bath water seems safe enough.

But wait, there's more: 'A remedy for ulcers and other sores is half a pint of water brought to the boil and, while boiling, poured over an ounce of walnut leaves and then two ounces of sugar added, stir until dissolved. Lint soaked in this is laid on the sore and bandaged on'.

And then, there's this: 'Keep the vinegar from pickled walnuts as a gargle for sore throats, diluted with warm water'. Would a teaspoon of vinegar to a glass of water be sufficient? Does anyone know?

Shall I go on ? There's a recipe for walnut marmalade.

'To each half a pound (230 grams) of green walnuts take a pint of water and three-quarters of a pound (340 grams) of sugar. Slice the green walnuts into the boiling water and cook until soft, which takes about 40 minutes. Add the sugar and boil until it sets, about 20 minutes. Pour into hot, sterilised jam jars.'

As an aside, I'm told that 'walnut and blackcurrant jam is made with one pound of walnuts (450 grams) to a quarter-pound (110 grams) of blackcurrants and one and a quarter pounds of sugar. Treat as for walnut marmalade'.

And finally: 'To make a dye, boil leaves and husks of the ripened walnuts, having pounded and chopped first, in a gallon of cold water . . .'

That's where the old notebook has lost a page, but perhaps folk who know about fabric dyeing would be able to complete that one. I remember from books I read as a child that walnut was used to disguise oneself to look very suntanned. Does it have a future as a suntan lotion or cream? I think I might have said enough so I'm going, I'm going.

NAILS AND SCREWS

An Illustrated Guide

by Kel Connell, Karuah, NSW.

Nailing is more than just holding a nail with one hand, and bashing it in with a hammer held in the other. Some planning is required to prevent disappointments later. Near enough is not good enough, especially on your own house. There are rules or codes for almost everything these days. Owner builders might find it beneficial to seek advice from Standards Association of Australia Timber Engineering Code (AS 1720).

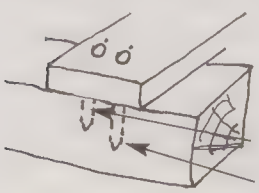
NAILED JOINS

The strength of a nailed join depends on six considerations.

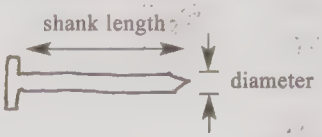
- Suitability of the nail for the job (external or internal).
- Nail shank (length) and type.
- Nail diameter.
- Amount of timber surrounding the nail.
- Withdrawal resistance (grip).
- Type and condition of timber – knots, borers, fungi, density etc.

Some of the above considerations may require further clarification. Consult your supplier or SAA Timber Engineering Code (AS 1720) if in doubt, especially for large constructions.

It sometimes occurs in coastal regions when storms or strong winds hit the area that one house is destroyed while its neighbour is basically undamaged. I wonder if a petty-minded, or ignorant, builder might have saved a few dollars by using shorter nails than were needed for the application. A nail long enough to resist withdrawal in hardwood would be inadequate if used in softwood as softwoods require longer shank nails for equal grip.



When buying nails order them by shank length and diameter.



TYPES OF NAILS

Bullet Head

Use bullet head nails when you need the nails to be hidden, such as for flooring. Drive the head into the wood, punch it down and putty the remaining hole.

Flat Head

Use flat heads for their holding ability, such as when fixing canvas or similar.

Timber Deck

Timber deck nails are galvanised and corrosion resistant. They are heavy duty nails for exterior use, designed for the nail head to be driven below the decking surface.

Roofing Nails

Nails for roofing have a fluted shank, for tighter grip on purlins, which allows them to resist vibrations of roof sheets caused by wind. The flutes grip the purlins.

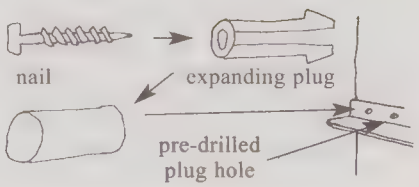
Underlay Nails

The extra wide flat head of underlay nails makes them suitable for fixing hardboard underlay that goes beneath carpet, lino, masonite sheet or tiles, leaving a smooth, flat surface on which to fix the carpet or other flooring.

Concrete Nails

Use concrete nails for fixing to vertical surfaces. The fluted nail fits into an

Concrete Nails



expanding plug that is inserted into a predrilled plug hole.

Fibre Nails

Use these general-purpose nails for fixing medium density boards to timber framing.

Panel Pins

More like a pin than a nail, panel pins are used for fixing small, thin softwood mouldings and similar.

Alsinite Roofing Nails

A rubber cup head gives Alsinite roofing nails a waterproof seal and a cushioned hold on Alsinite roofing.

To minimise expansion damage to Alsinite drill nail holes slightly oversize, allowing for expansion of the roofing sheet on hot days and contraction on cold days.

Cut Tacks

Use cut tacks for fixing carpet or lino.

Self-Tapping Screws

Self-tapping or self-drilling screws are more efficient than nails and are most commonly used for roofing to resist the upward thrust of roofing sheets in windy weather. They are screwed in using a drilling machine and a hexagon adaptor.

FIXING METHODS

Skew Nailing

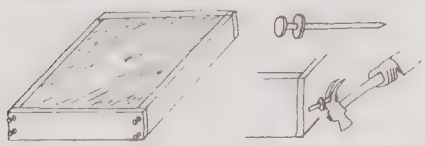
On building construction use skew nailing for strength and grip.

Nailing Into End Grains

correct method incorrect method

Joint strength is affected by contraction, expansion and shrinkage. Nailing into end grain on an angle resists the tendency of nails to loosen as wood dries and shrinks after wet weather.

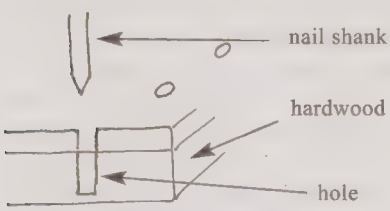
Concrete Formwork



double headed nails are easily extracted

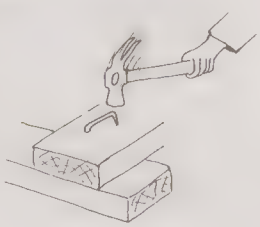
When nailing together formwork for concrete, use double-headed nails so they can be easily extracted; this saves time on large projects. The formwork is dismantled after concrete is set.

Drill Into Hardwood

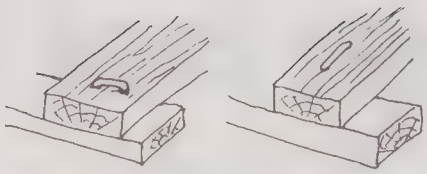


When nailing into Australian eucalyptus, a high-density hardwood, it might be necessary to drill holes to accept the nails. The hole's diameter should be 80 percent, or less, of nail shank diameter to ensure nail grip.

Clinching Nail Ends

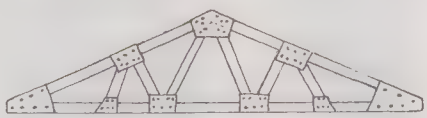


Clinching the nail ends increases the nail's grip (withdrawing resistance) considerably and is a strong, but time-consuming, method to use for gates and similar workloads. Clinching across the grain is much stronger than along the grain.



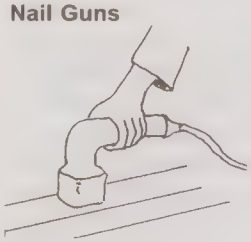
clinching across the grain clinching along the grain

Gang Nailing



Gang nails – galvanised steel prong-toothed plate connectors or gusset plates – are now commonly used in timber roof truss construction for quicker assembly.

Nail Guns

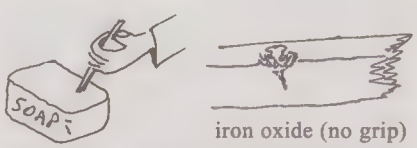


Staple nail guns are often used to save time and no hammering is involved.

Blunting Nails

Blunting the nail's point helps prevent splitting of wood as the blunt ends will tend to shear wood tissue rather than cause it to separate.

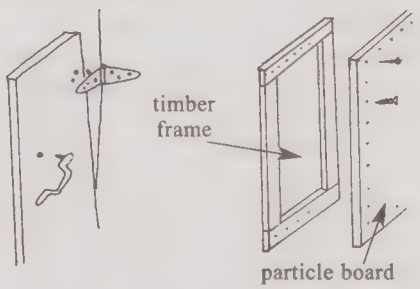
Lubricating Nails



Old-timers would press nails into soft soap to lubricate the ends so they would slip into the wood grain more easily. This was a doubtful advantage as the soap could cause nails to corrode. The iron oxide (rust) so formed would contaminate the timber, destroying the wood surrounding the nails.

An alternative to soap, in the days when males plastered their hair down with Brylcream or hair oil, was to slip the nail through the hair, thus lubricating it for easier nailing and less likelihood of splitting the wood. Hair cream or oil was a better choice than soap as oil is a corrosion resister.

Nailing Pineboard



Nails and screws have very weak grip in pineboards or particle boards manufactured from wood chips because the tissue and grains are not continuously bonded and have almost nil resistance to withdrawal forces.

Always nail or screw particle boards to a timber frame, never vice versa.

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The Layer Duck Breeds

by Megg Miller, Nagambie, Vic.

Indian Runners and Khaki Campbells generally crop up in discussions about duck eggs because of their superior laying ability. Anyone who bakes a lot will sing praise loud and long about the efficiency of these two breeds and the buckets of eggs they produce. Runners and Campbells are to the duck family what the Leghorn has been to the purebred chook world – economical birds with a high egg output. But in saying this, neither the Leghorn nor the two duck breeds comes within a cooee of equalling what a modern hybrid hen can lay. As well, their forte today is winning ribbons in a show pen and so utility features have slipped noticeably compared to the old days when they were top commercial breeds. Few families have need now for large numbers of eggs, so the more moderate output of current layer ducks is quite acceptable.

DOWN TO BASICS

Previous articles on purebred fowls have highlighted the way breeds are assorted into light-bodied or layer breeds and heavy-bodied or meat breeds (or meat and eggs combined). Unusual breeds like Frizzles or Silkies have been grouped separately from the industrious breeds as ornamental. Ducks are classified similarly and the petite breeds previously discussed in GR, the 'bantams', can also be largely regarded as ornamental. The Elizabeth, with good laying and fleshing qualities, is the exception in that group. Though the term dual-purpose isn't used today, it describes the Elizabeth and breeds we'll examine next issue. Right now our focus is the layer breeds and, along with the Runner and Campbell, we can include two less common breeds in this group: Buff Orpington and Welsh Harlequin.

LAYER DUCK CHARACTERISTICS

Layers are light-framed and lean, but with a spacious abdomen, very alert and active and display a nervous highly strung temperament. Being light-framed, they are economical eaters and burn up surplus energy rather than convert it into meat and muscle. It's very difficult to fatten up surplus young drakes so they look appealing on the table, they are always that little bit scrawny and angular. The layers and their brothers mature earlier than the big-bodied breeds and are usually more active and energetic foragers. Don't count on your ducks going broody or staying broody, high performing layers tend to be nonbroody or lack persistency of setting.

Unique stance of the Indian Runner.

LAYER DUCK BREEDS

Campbell

The Khaki is the best known in this family, but there is also a Dark varicty and a solid White variety. The breed was developed in the early years of the twentieth century by a Mrs Campbell from Gloucestershire in England. She wanted a more conventional looking and better layer than the Runner, so bred the latter with Rouen and then introduced Mallard into resulting offspring several years later. An 'egg-laying machine' was the contemporary description of Mrs Campbell's stock. Disinterested in the exhibition scene, she initially held back from standardising and having her birds accepted into the book of standards. The term 'khaki' was used for her breed because of the dull yellow-brown colour of the plumage; as well, it was a patriotic way to acknowledge the brave men going off to the First World War.

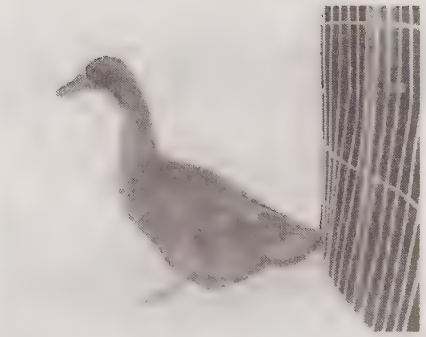
Campbell males weigh around 2.25 – 2.50 kilograms and females weigh 2.00 – 2.5 kilograms. They stand moderately upright, with a gentle slant to the backline and have a reasonably deep and wide body. Khaki females are a warm, even shade, with a slightly darker head and neck and lightly laced breast and back. Males have a green-bronze head, neck, stern and wing bar, with the rest of the plumage being a warm khaki shade. Eggs from Khakis are white shelled.

Indian Runner

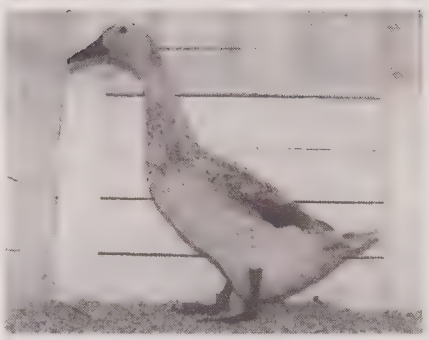
This breed shot to prominence as a result of the White drake in 'Babe', but plumage colour is more varied than just white; there is a diverse range available. Runners are unlike any other duck breed, with their erect stance and wine bottle looking body. They have evolved from the working ducks of Southeast Asia, where for centuries they have weeded crops and devoured insects in the rice paddy fields. To do this effectively, and to walk to market at the end of their working life, vigorous selection occurred for an upright body with a long neck, a long wide bill and strong legs set at the rear of the body. Not only have the years of selection and field work resulted in a unique looking duck, but also one that is highly intelligent and capable of working within marker flags in horticultural ventures, or being dressed up and herded around by sheep dogs for viewers' entertainment at farm field days.

Runners are expected to weigh between 1.58 and 2.25 kilograms (males) and 1.36 and 2.00 kilograms (females). Physical features that distinguish the breed include the elongated, slim but rounded body, a funnel shape where the shoulders merge into the

A young Buff Orpington duck.



Khaki Campbell was patriotically named.



Welsh Harlequins are becoming popular.

long, slender neck and a racing looking flat-topped head with high-set eyes and a wedge-shaped bill. The Runner is capable of standing almost perpendicular, especially when in the show pen or carrying the body while moving at an angle of between 50 and 80 degrees. Runners, of course, don't walk sedately or waddle, but move briskly at a run. Expect a few less eggs per season than you will get from Campbells, with eggshell colour often varying between white and blue, depending on the variety's plumage colour.

Buff Orpington

This breed was created by Mr Cook, the same person who developed the Orpington fowl, and it was a clever amalgamation of popular breeds with utility characteristics that meshed well together. It was bred to be a dual-purpose duck and so never achieved the high output its rivals – Campbells and Runners – managed. Over the years it was a good bird for sideline ventures where eggs were the priority, but farmers could increase their income through the sale of drakes as small table birds.

Orpingtons have the classic duck shape: a long, deep, broad body which they carry slightly elevated at the shoulders; a moderately long, slender neck; oval-shaped head with bold, high-set eyes and a medium-length straight bill. Plumage is a deep red buff, the drake carrying a seal-brown neck and head. Desirable weights are between 2.25 and 3.40 kilograms for males and 2.25 and 3.20 kilograms for females. Shell colour of eggs is white.

Welsh Harlequin

These are the least well known of the layer group, but they are turning up with increasing frequency at shows Australia-wide. What is a Welsh Harlequin? It initially originated in England as a sport from the Khaki Campbell, then, following relocation and mishap, almost disappeared. Overseas, some were infused with Aylesbury and others bred back to the Khaki Campbell. Australian specimens have probably originated from sports or experimental matings with breeds like Silver Appleyard. There is sufficient similarity between Aussie Harlequins and Appleyards to confuse all but the most knowledgeable breeder.

Their carriage, shape and physical characteristics are like the Khaki Campbell, the breed from which they originated. Colour, however, is very different. The male's head and upper neck is seal-brown, separated from the body colour by a sharp, white circle. The upper torso is red-brown laced with white and fading to a creamy white underneath the body. The duck has a honey-fawn head, the colour fading to fawn on most of the body and to a creamy white along the belly and abdomen. A distinct tortoiseshell pattern appears on the back and wings, the result of red-brown and cream alongside the fawn main colour. Males' legs are bright orange, females' dark brown and the bill is olive-green with a black bean (tip of bill) on males, but gunmetal or slate grey on females. The dark leg colour on the ducks is one way of distinguishing them from Silver Appleyards, which have light orange legs. Eggshell colour is white.

MANAGEMENT TIPS

Providing a safe, quiet environment is essential for layer breeds as they are easily frightened or upset. They will do best if they can forage in the garden or orchard or on the farm as they cannot be equalled for their enthusiastic and active slug and snail control. They are not like the Muscovy who works a few hours and whiles away the rest; they like to keep busy and included in this is rapacious behaviour from the males. Don't just buy a trio; the drake needs a healthy number of ducks to serve, but if you have to, make up a larger harem with crossbred or farm ducks.

To ensure you get ducklings, because it is a waste of eggs setting them under layer ducks, keep a Muscovy female or two or crossbreds to carry out this important task. One thing is certain, you will have ample eggs to choose from for setting.

OBTAINING STOCK

Look locally at poultry auctions or shows for breeders and order stock if you can't get birds straight away. Other options for stock are breeders exhibiting at Royal Shows, with office staff passing on details, or from poultry or waterfowl clubs listed at the back of *Australasian Poultry* magazine.

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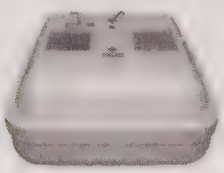

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Homemade Nappy Liners

by Emily Hill, Brunswick, Vic.

If you are using cloth nappies on your bub, you might like to make your own liners. They are reusable, so will save you money in the long term, and they're ridiculously easy to make – no sewing necessary. I made mine out of polyester fleece.

WHAT YOU NEED

I purchased two metres of polyester fleece (microfleece) from my local discount material store. Because it was summer, fleece was on sale for $5 a metre. The material was enough for 30 liners, with just under a metre left over for baby wipes. One metre would make 20 liners, sufficient for most bubs.

You also need a liner pattern and some sharp scissors.

WHY FLEECE LINERS?

- Fleece liners keep nappies cleaner and drier, protecting them from staining and extending the time they remain on the bottom.
- Fleece made from 100 percent polyester does not hold onto moisture, so is an effective stay-dry barrier against the baby's bottom. It draws or 'wicks' the moisture away from the skin and back into the soaker part of the nappy, which means less nappy rash.
- Fleece cleans easily in the washing machine with the nappies and dries almost immediately.
- Fleece liners are cheaper and softer than paper wipes.
- Poo drops off fleece very easily into the toilet. If it's a loose one, it can be swished in the toilet water or flushed over.
- Fleece is also good for wiping baby's bottom because it is textured, not smooth, so gets more off with each wipe.

Be aware, though, that some babies are allergic to fleece and might be better with raw silk or some other fabric.

HOW TO MAKE

Blow up and cut out the pattern provided, lay out your fleece, pin on the pattern and cut around it. Fleece doesn't fray so there's no hemming or sewing involved. Once you have a fleece template, you can just use that to cut around, and you won't need to pin.

It took me almost two hours to cut 30 liners (20 should be enough, but I had the material and got carried away). It wasn't the most entertaining task I've ever taken on, but not difficult.

Nappy Liner
(25% of original size)

I like the rounded hourglass shape, but you could try a rectangle about 15 x 30 centimetres. You could make it wider at the top and bottom to cover more of the nappy area, or cut a huge triangle (pointing downwards on the nappy). You can also vary the size depending on the age of the bub and the type of nappies used – fitted cloth nappies might require smaller liners.

Prewash the liners a few time to remove fabric finishes otherwise liquid might run off them rather than through to the nappy.

If you have any material left over, cut it into squares for reusable wipes. Moisten with water, cold chamomile tea, a dollop of sorbolene cream or whatever your choice of cleanser, wipe your bub's bottom, then throw in the wash with the nappies. Easy!

SPERM COUNTS

Plastic-lined disposable nappies may have an adverse effect on male sperm counts. German researchers have found that the natural cooling mechanism in the testes is unable to function with the disposables as it does with the looser-fitting cloth nappies.

SPORT AND PREGNANCY

Recently there has been debate about the effects of exercise on the mother and foetus during pregnancy. Guidelines have been drawn up that highlight the benefits to pregnant women of remaining active. These include improved weight control and maintenance of fitness. There may also be benefits in terms of reduced risk of developing gestational diabetes mellitus and improved psychological functioning. There have been no reports of foetal injury or death in relation to trauma or contact during sporting activities, though a risk obviously exists. To study the statement in full, go to www.ausport.gov.au

American Groundnuts

by Lin Foley, Mylneford, NSW.

I love walking through our garden each day and marvelling at any changes in the plants, especially those I haven't grown before. How big will it grow? What will the flowers look like? Will it be a success? Last year I tried American groundnuts for the first time and was delighted with the result. Not only was I rewarded with unusual mauve flowers, but also a bountiful edible harvest.

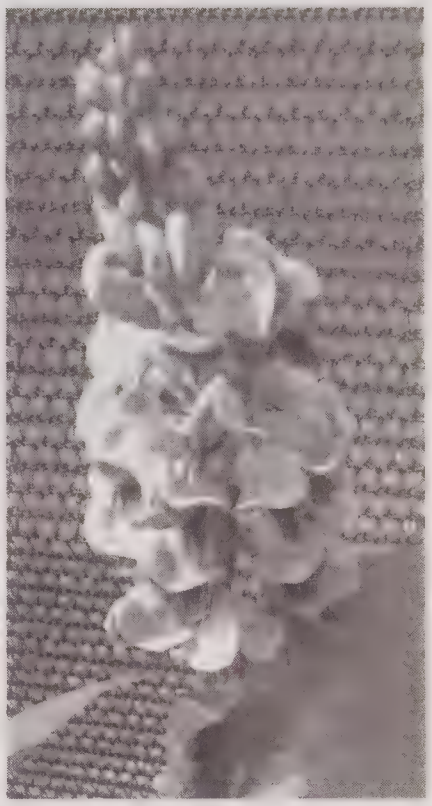
American groundnuts (*Apios americana*) are also known as potato beans, India potatoes and spring nuts. The American Indians regarded them as a highly valuable food source and introduced the nuts to the early American settlers who considered them a survival food.

American groundnuts or seeds can be planted in the garden or in containers in early spring. The best spot to grow them is in a semi-shady position with rich well-drained soil. They are leguminous vines and therefore will need a trellis or nearby tree for support. Being a legume, this plant is able to fix nitrogen and is therefore a valuable companion plant.

I prefer to plant the nuts in containers with double bottoms, which allow the plants to access water during dry spells. The plants also have the potential to become invasive, making growing them in containers a better option. Despite its delicate appearance of fine stems and leaves and petite sweet-smelling flowers, the vine is remarkably hardy.

In our mild northern NSW climate, the vine grows into early winter and then rapidly dies off. This is the time to start digging up the nuts. Last year I was happily surprised with a bountiful harvest of nuts, strung together like beads on a string and varying from pea to walnut sized.

The nuts taste similar to sweet potatoes and can be boiled, baked, roasted or added to stews, soups and casseroles. They can also be dried, ground and added to soups as a thickening agent. I read that they could be eaten raw, but my teeth didn't agree with this. The tubers contain 17 percent protein, three times the amount found in potatoes!



Top: Groundnut tubers as dug up.
Above: Grow in pots to contain roots.
Right: The attractive groundnut flower.

If last year's harvest is anything to go by, I should have plenty for others. So if you are interested in purchasing some groundnuts, email me on macushla@nor.com.au or write to Lin Foley, 1301 Rogan Bridge Rd, Mylneford, NSW 2460. Groundnuts should be available from early winter 2006 till late spring 2006.

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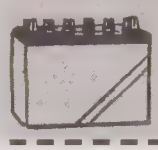

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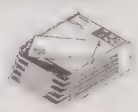

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Increasing Battery Storage Capacity

by Christine Taylor, Black Forest, SA.

We have increased our battery capacity several times over the years. Fortunately, this latest time we didn't have to rebuild the battery box as well. Whenever you increase your storage capacity you acquire batteries or cells that are physically larger than the previous set, so it is often necessary to make a bigger box for them. This time we avoided that extra problem and still have two sets of cells in the box.

We had an 'A' set with 160 ampere-hours capacity and a 'B' set with 130 ampere-hours capacity. Now we have an 'A' set with 330 ampere-hours capacity and a 'B' set with 130 ampere-hours.

Our normal system is a 12-volt operation. Only if we need to use 240-volt electric tools do we run our generator. We use a gas stove and refrigerator, but everything else we need is on 12 volts. We have a radio, TV and tape recorder (and could but don't run a VCR), all on 12 volts. We have had as many as 14 people sleeping in the shack at one time and frequently have six or seven using lights and appliances in the normal fashion. Our previous storage system coped with the load, though we had to run the generator and battery charger once or twice. We hope those days are over now that we have extra storage. Here's how we did it.

REMOVE THE FUSE

The very first thing we did was to temporarily remove the fuse. If you don't already have a fuse in your system, that should be remedied immediately. You never know when you might need to work on the batteries and even 12 volts can give you a nasty shock. There is an old saying: 'volts jolt, amps damp'. Twelve volts might not stop your heart beating, but it can definitely hurt. A short circuit on a high-capacity bank of 12-volt batteries carries a lot of amps. Have a fuse in the system.

So we removed the fuse and started to disconnect the old batteries (or cells, in our case) carefully. Even with the fuse out each cell has a charge. Unfortunately, we did not have a properly insulated spanner that fitted all the different sized bolts that had to be undone that day, but we did use it where we could. The spanner handle is insulated and is hinged to the top of a box-type spanner. The hinge allows us to exert force onto the nut in the correct direction, while the box shape spreads the force evenly onto all the surfaces of the nut. A normal open-ended spanner allows you to exert the force in the same plane as the nut, but acts only on two faces at a time.

OUT WITH THE OLD

We numbered the cells before we took them out to make it just a little easier to fit them back into the space available. Then we moved the cells out of the way and stood them side by side, but not connected.

The frame the old banks of cells had been on had to be removed. As usual, Murphy's Law determined that the old frame would not be the right size to hold the new cells, so a new floor had be made up and covered with vinyl.

The vinyl protects the surface from the corrosive effect of any electrolyte that spills during use.

IN WITH THE NEW

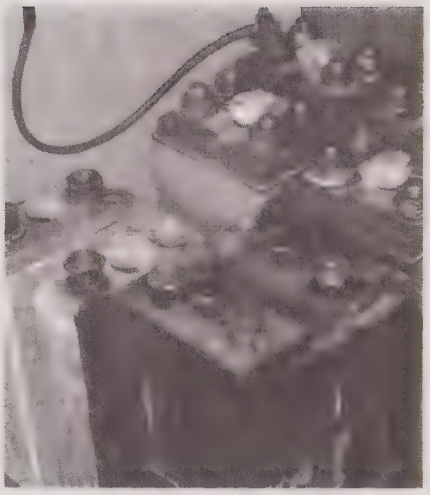
We had measured the old battery box and decided that the new batteries would have to be connected side by side rather than in a single line if they were to fit in comfortably. However, when we were actually connecting them we realised that if we set them with their longest sides next to each other we would have a space at either end of the line and no room to fit one of the old sets in front of the new ones.

If, instead, we connected them with their shorter sides next to each other there would be no wasted space at the ends of the battery box and there might be room to put that old set in front. So we disconnected five cells and reconnected them in the new configuration and were happy with the result.

When connecting batteries of cells never hesitate to check and recheck that you have them connected positive to negative all the way along the chain. We had to turn several around before we connected them, but we got it right in the end. Make sure you have long enough cables to reach both ends of the line, the positive to the fuse and the negative to the common negative point.

We had to be particularly careful when we reinstalled the old set of batteries as they had come with peculiar lengths of heavy connecting cables. We could possibly have made up replacement cables, but would have had trouble sourcing the very heavy copper cable required, so we worked out how the cables had been used to connect positive to negative before and turned the cells around to match, and it worked.

Use a spanner to undo bolts.



130, 160, 330 and ampere-hour nicad cells.

With that particular set of cells, because they were in a single line, we have a very long earth lead. It is important to have a common negative point in a battery box. It is much better to use a long lead than to possibly have parts of your box at different potentials.

When all the batteries were in place and connected correctly to each other we replaced the fuses and had electricity. Wow!

At one stage we'd had to turn the solar system off completely and it made strange noises to tell us that it was trying to find somewhere to send the solar power to and couldn't. Now we could turn that back on too. Most of the time we have one set of batteries being trickle-charged from the solar panels and the other set getting its charge from the wind generator. This works quite well as long as we change over the systems periodically.

VERSATILITY

We folk who live away from 'civilisation' need to be versatile. One such occasion came up during this battery enhancement project. The terminals of all batteries become corroded with time, so when you are replacing them is a good time to clean the terminals. In most cases this can be done using bicarbonate of soda from the kitchen. In our case this wouldn't work. We don't have lead-acid batteries, we have nickel-iron batteries; thus we do not need an alkali to clean the terminals, we need an acid.

Did you suggest vinegar? That would have been marvellous, except that we rarely use vinegar and didn't have any. After a few moments of thought we came up with a possible solution that did not mean an hour's trip to the nearest shop. We opened a tin of beetroot and hoped the liquid would be acidic enough. It was! There is usually a solution to every problem.

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RECYCLING RUNS RIOT

Paint Tin Speaker Units

by Roberino, Arrawarra Beach, NSW.

Recycling comes in numerous forms and opportunities and usually saves money for the recycler. Most people enjoy music in its many guises and the sound quality depends a lot on the quality of the speaker units. Speakers made for use in cars can be purchased fairly inexpensively from large car accessory shops and are often of quite good quality. Three-way speaker pairs of about 15 centimetres diameter are the most popular.

Such units can be easily connected to TV sets, CD players, tape decks and radios to greatly enhance your enjoyment of music with better sound quality for a relatively small cost. To make the speakers usable in these applications a speaker box is required. I was asked to make some for friends and, after a bit of thought, came up with a very cheap but effective method.

I went to the local paint shop and asked for a pair of used 17-centimetre-diameter paint tins with lids. As it turned out, this is a standard four-litre tin. I chose tins with attached wire handles because of the choice they allowed of the speakers being either hung from a wall or ceiling hook or sat on their sides or bottoms. My next step was to visit a carpet shop a few doors away from the paint shop and ask for some offcuts. So far all this was painless and costless.

I measured the speakers and found that a hole of 14.5 centimetres diameter in either the lid or bottom of the paint tins was needed in order for the speakers to sit properly on the tins. I decided a hole in each bottom would best suit my purpose. Cutting the tins can be hazardous, so don't let children do it and if you are not experienced in working with metal yourself, or don't have the right tools, get a plumber or sheetmetal worker to do the cutting. The cut edges will be as sharp as razor blades, so take along some clear plastic tubing, bought at any hardware store. A metre length of one-centimetre-diameter tubing will do. The tradesperson can slit the plastic tubing lengthwise and fit it over the cut edges.

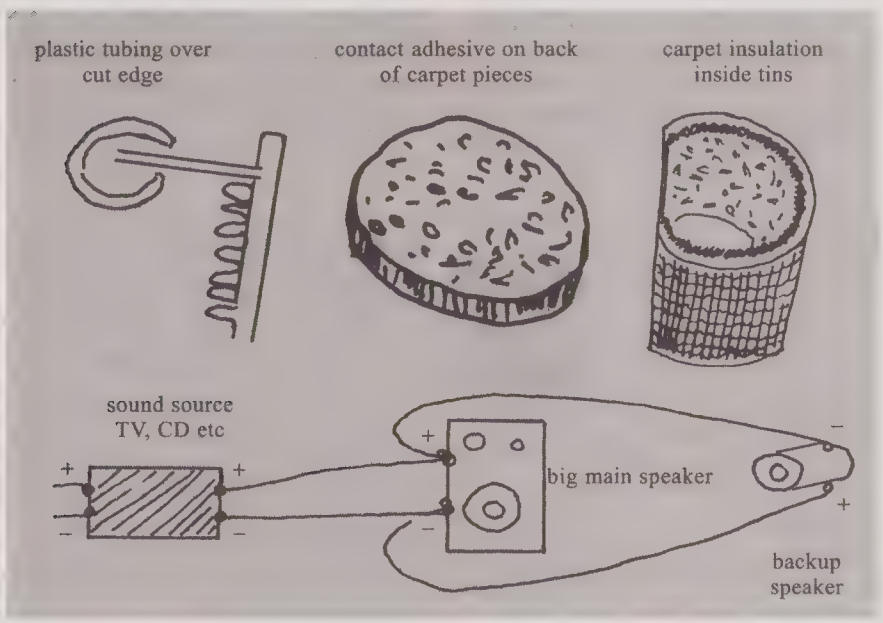
Now cut the carpet to neatly line the tins: top, bottom and inside circumference. Butter the backs of the carpet pieces with contact adhesive glue and press the carpet onto the inside of the tins. This will give the tins good acoustics.

The outside of the tins can now be covered in whatever way suits you; maybe some fabric or more of the carpet.

Using the self-tapping screws provided with the speakers, fit them to the paint tins. With the lids off the tins, you have access to the rear of the speakers to connect your wires. You will need two plugs to suit your music source and four plugs to suit your speakers, plus figure-of-eight two-core flex cable of the length you need to separate the speakers for stereo use. Generally, about four metres apart gives a good stereo effect, but you can discuss this with the shop attendant where you buy your plugs. At the same time, find out which are the positive and negative parts of the plugs so you can match these up with the positive and negative terminals of the speakers.

Punch a hole in the lids with a nail for your speaker wires to go through. You will find that the speaker wire is coded with a colour strip to one of the wire's insulation plastics so it's easy to find the positive wire. If you need to access the speakers for any reason, it's an easy matter to remove the lids.

These speakers can be used as back-up for much larger speakers, running off the backs of the larger speakers, for instance, behind your normal listening area, to give a surround-sound experience. In this type of use you get the best effect by connecting the backup speakers' polarity in reverse of that you would use if employing them as the main speakers (see diagram).



Liquid Manure

by Dorothy Creevey, Old Bonalbo, NSW.

When it comes to stimulating plant growth, liquid manure is the best of the quick-fix options. For anyone who has a worm farm, the liquid exudate, diluted to the required strength, is an ideal liquid manure. Don't have a worm farm? Don't worry, a good alternative can be made from a variety of organic materials including weeds, comfrey leaves, lawn clippings, seaweed, green leaves, nettles, leafy green vegetable scraps, manure (contained in a suspended bag), garden trimmings and compost.

MAKING LIQUID MANURE

Fill a bucket with any of the above and top up with water. Wait a week or two till it starts to turn brown. Pour the diluted liquid onto flowering and fruiting plants as required. Add more water and let it brew again. After a month or two you can use the gunk at the bottom of the bucket as mulch.

An idea I think is worth trying is to place your liquid manure bucket in the garden bed where you can add weeds and leaves as you tidy up and use the liquid manure on the bed as needed.

Urine

Another useful liquid manure is healthy, fresh urine. It is a good fertiliser, high in nitrogen and low in phosphorus. Use it on fruit trees and shrubs, but not soft edible plants. Dilute 1 part urine to 10 parts water and apply it once a fortnight by pouring over mulch, not onto bare ground. Alternatively, add a little to other liquid manures. Stale urine is a good weed killer.

Comfrey

Comfrey leaves are 17 percent nitrogen and are potassium rich. Chop about a kilogram of leaves and cover with 15 litres of water. Leave it to sit for four weeks. Dilute with an equal quantity of water and pour around plant roots. For a larger quantity, if you have a big container and plenty of comfrey, use 7 kilograms of comfrey leaves in 90 litres of water.

Molasses

Diluted molasses is a good liquid manure, but remember that molasses is a product of the first process of sugar refinement and as such could contain the most chemicals.

APPLYING LIQUID MANURE

Avoid the heat of the day; apply before 10am or after 4pm. Apply to plants in full vegetative growth and again when plants start making buds, blossoms, pods, seeds and fruit. A weak solution applied at times of plant stress might be beneficial.

In the case of tomatoes and other plants with a long growing season, applications every two to three weeks will extend the fruiting season and improve quality.

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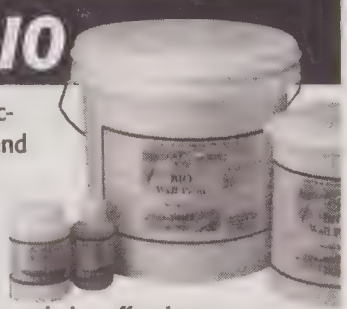

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Living With Floods

Getting Your Home In Order

by Peter Crawley, Oakleigh, Vic.

Once you have electrical and gas connections and appliances sorted out, the order you clean up the rest of the house really doesn't matter. I recommend you use a top-down approach and quickly handle or remove any item that is wet to reduce the possibility of mould damage. While doing this keep a record listing in detail all items removed from the house for future insurance claims, tax loss claims, and possible replacement. At the very minimum this record must contain the following details for each item:

- quantity
- detailed description
- purchase date (exact or close estimate)
- purchase price
- current market value
- location within the house

While performing the cleanup you must also document all purchases of supplies, materials, labour, appliances and furniture and take numerous photographs of any damage and repairs.

Just remember you must take your time and be careful to ensure that everything is dried out thoroughly and clean and free of mould before you start to repair anything. For example, a flooded concrete slab needs to be dried out thoroughly before carpet is relaid and this can take several weeks. If you lay the new carpet before the slab is properly dry, it will ultimately rot and cost you lots more.

USE BLEACH WITH CAUTION

People involved in flood cleanup are urged to take special precautions when using bleach as a disinfectant. Bleach should not be mixed with other household cleaners, especially those containing ammonia, because an extremely deadly chlorine gas can form. There are documented cases in which people have been overcome by chlorine fumes. In the majority of these cases the area was first disinfected with bleach and then other cleaners were used that contained ammonia. If an area has been cleaned with other products, it should be thoroughly rinsed with uncontaminated water before bleach is used.

CLEANING WALLS

Failing to provide special care to your walls will cost you lots in the long term. Plaster walls and wallpaper need different treatments from painted brick or concrete block walls.

To dry a wall you will need to remove the insulation and provide the greatest airflow possible around and through it. This will involve ventilating the wall cavities somewhat. You must allow at least two months before applying paint because paint applied to damp walls (even if it is only damp on the inside) will later blister and peel.

If the plaster is not too badly damaged, plastered walls and wallpaper can be cleaned without replacing the paper. Just allow the plaster to dry thoroughly before brushing off any loose surface dirt and then washing it well.

For a painted brick wall use a mild soap or nonsudsing commercial cleaner to wash the wall after it has dried and then rinse with clean water.

One commercial contract cleaner recommended that you should always start washing a wall at the bottom and work up because starting at the top will result in water running down over the soiled area and streaking it, but water running over a clean area can be wiped off without damage. In all cases the ceiling should be done last.

After walls are cleaned and before they are painted or wallpaper is replaced, you need to disinfect the wall to stop mould or mildew. To do this paint or spray walls with a quaternary disinfectant (available from janitorial or dairy supply outlets) using the recommended strength. The same solution can be applied to washable wallpapers.

Concrete walls require a slightly different cleaning strategy. First, remove any surface mud or silt with a coarse brush or long-handled broom. Once this is done spray or wet the wall with lukewarm water, then scrub using a stiff brush with a strong soapy solution. Repeat if necessary, using clean soapy water. Finally, rinse the wall with a brush moistened in clear, lukewarm water. To remove odours, use a chlorine bleach solution.

CLOTHING AND TEXTILES

It is important to quickly process your flood-damaged clothing and textiles in order to reduce the possibility of further damage to them, however, deciding what to do first can be difficult. Do not leave wet clothes piled in a heap at any time because the warm and dark conditions in the centre will be a perfect environment for the growth of mildew, which can permanently damage most textiles, especially natural fibres such as cotton, linen and wool.

If you have to leave your clothing or other textiles for any time before processing them, place them in a container of clean water, making sure that they are fully covered, and replace the water on a regular basis. This will at least give you some time to process them as mould will not develop in water.

To get rid of the mud the first step is to rinse the soiled clothing well in clear water. In general, for washable clothes, you should use the same procedures you would use for dirty baby nappies. That is, after soaking clothes in cold water to remove as much mud as possible, wash them in hot water with a heavy-duty detergent. Using about half a cup of water conditioner will boost

the detergent's cleaning power. Then wash a second time in hot water and bleach to reduce bacterial contamination that may have occurred. Add an 'all-fabric' bleach when washing most coloured clothing. For colourfast or white clothes, add a cup of liquid chlorine bleach to the wash cycle, unless the water contains a lot of iron. Iron in the water will stain the clothes if chlorine bleach is used.

If outdoor lines are available and it is sunny, clothes can be rinsed and hung up outdoors to dry. Indoors, air conditioning will assist drying, but in its absence dehumidifiers or fans may help speed the drying process. If outside sun drying is not available, another less recognised sanitation strategy can be used to assist: pressing with a hot iron. This might be helpful for some cotton clothes and bed linens.

Drycleanable clothes, if worth salvaging, should be sent to the drycleaner. The chemicals in the cleaning process and the high-temperature steam pressing will sanitise the items.

BEDDING MATERIAL

Hang all bedding out to air and dry thoroughly, then brush to remove excess dirt and soil.

Blankets

Put woollen blankets through a drycleaning process as the thorough washing necessary could cause shrinkage. Put washable blankets (rayon, acrylic, cotton) through two complete washing cycles. Air-dry or use an automatic dryer at proper temperature settings.

Sheets And Pillowcases

Put through two complete washing cycles. Bleach using diluted liquid chlorine bleach to help kill germs in the first wash and nappy cleaner in the second wash. Follow your regular drying procedure.

Quilts And Comforters

Wash or dryclean, depending on fibre content of the bedding. Usually it's best to wash cotton quilts, however, drycleaning facilities can be used.

Pillows

If pillows are foam rubber or stuffed with feathers or Fiberfil, put them through a regular washing cycle using lukewarm water and a nonchlorine disinfectant in the wash or rinse water (for pillows containing foam, down or feathers) or bleach (for Fiberfil pillows). Do not overload the machine, as the fill needs to move while washing. I recommend that only a single pillow be washed at a time in a normal washing machine or two pillows for a large commercial machine.

Check the ticking on a feather pillow to see if it is tight. If it is, do not take the feathers out of the pillow. If the ticking is worn, transfer the feathers to a muslin bag larger than the ticking and wash the feathers in it; then dry in the open air. Either wash the original ticking, or buy a new cover and sew in the washed feathers.

For both foam rubber and feather pillows stop the washing process midway and turn the pillow over by hand.

Do not wash kapok and cotton-filled pillows as the filling will become lumpy because water disintegrates kapok and tangles cotton. These pillows should be disposed of.

Warning: Air-dry foam rubber pillow as there is danger of fire if they are put in an automatic dryer. Feather pillows may be dried in an automatic dryer at a low temperature setting or may be air-dried. Air-dried pillows can be fluffed up by hand as they are drying.

Mattresses

Because of their relative cheapness, many advisors do not recommend you recondition a foam rubber or urethane-foam mattress, saying it is better to buy a new one. However, it can be done if the mattress is labelled mildew-proof and odourless. If not, I wouldn't attempt to do it. For these mattresses the cover can be removed and machine-washed (or you may want to discard it and buy a new cover). The foam mattress part can be thoroughly washed by squeezing a detergent and water solution through the foam and then hanging it from a clothesline to rinse with a garden hose. Do this at least twice and on the final rinse really soak the material well. The mattress should then be air-dried. Do not use any form of heat-drying technique.

Reconditioning other types of mattresses is too difficult to do at home. For a good innerspring mattress, check with a nearby commercial renovating company to see if it is worth reclaiming. Make sure you check the cost of renovation against replacement cost as it may save you money to throw it away and buy a new one. As a general rule, inexpensive mattresses are not worth the expense of reclaiming and should be discarded. For more expensive mattresses reconditioning may be possible if the wooden frame is not warped and the cost of the new covering and padding materials is not prohibitive. It's your decision, however, the work needs to be done professionally.

FURNITURE

Floods can damage furniture even when it was stored out of the water's reach. The excessive moisture in buildings surrounded by water can result in similar problems to those in furniture that was actually flooded.

In many cases, in particular with furniture with natural finishes, all that is needed is a good clean and condition and items will be as new.

Furniture that was under water or absorbed lots of moisture is likely to warp and veneered furniture that is badly warped is almost irreparable. This is not something you should do at home, so consult your furniture dealer about it.

In the case of upholstered furniture the important issue is the condition of any wood that might have been used in the frame. If the frame is badly affected, the cost of repair could be prohibitive. If the frame is acceptable, or made of steel, you need to treat the metal parts to stop rusting. This may involve completely disassembling the unit and processing each part in turn using a rust converting undercoat followed by a standard metal paint finish (black is normally used) and, if required, using a little light oil for lubrication. While you are doing this check if the webbing or stuffing is decayed or odorous. In this case, depending on the type of stuffing used, it might just need to be cleaned, or may require replacing. If the webbing is damaged, replace it.

With so many different issues to consider, I would recommend that you allow a professional to determine if it

is practical and cost effective to clean the unit or if it just should be replaced.

WOOD FLOORS AND WOODWORK

The first step, before the house dries out, is to clean all flood damaged woodwork with a stiff but nonabrasive brush, plenty of water and a nonsudsing detergent to remove mud and silt from corners, cracks and crevices. This step might need to be repeated if the house's partitions and walls are not yet dry as the draining of the area could result in more water and mud on the floor near the walls concerned.

Use your regular cleaning product for a final, thorough washing. If refinishing is necessary, wait until moisture has dried from wood frames and between walls and floors and the backs of trim. This can take several months. Consult an experienced professional for refinishing, or follow instructions on standard brands of finishes and varnishes for household use.

In most cases the wood floors will probably buckle as they dry. In this case leave them alone to dry after washing them. This can take several months, so be careful when walking around the house as the floorboards could move and will be a trip hazard.

After the house is dry, there are several possibilities for renovating the floors. Some of the buckled flooring may be bent back into place with nails, which is really only a short-term solution, and the resulting humps may have to be removed by planing or sanding. A second possibility is to fully or partially replace the floor. If you are going to take this option, make sure that the floor joists and bearers are completely dry to prevent the possibility of future damage.

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Mould and mildew are common problems with wet wood. If the wood becomes badly infected, it must be replaced. A light covering of mould or mildew can be cleaned by scrubbing with a mild alkali, such as washing soda or trisodium phosphate, using a heaped tablespoon to each litre of water. Make sure you rinse well with clear water after scrubbing with alkali and allow the wood to dry thoroughly. Once the wood is dry apply a mildew-resistant finish.

DISHES AND COOKING UTENSILS

Dishes and cooking utensils that have been covered by floodwater should be carefully inspected, washed and disinfected before they are used again. Discard any items made of a porous material such as clay, wood, plastic or rubber. Any dishes with deep cracks or scratches should be thrown away as these items can't be sanitised without using expensive sterilisation techniques.

The remaining items should be washed in a hot detergent solution, using a brush, if necessary, to remove all dirt and stains. If any of the equipment can be separated or taken apart, such as handles from frying pans and saucepans, clean them separately.

After washing, rinse all items well in clear hot water at least twice, changing the water between each rinse. Then immerse them in a chlorine solution using the recommended dilution ratio to sanitise.

To sanitise metal items, boil them in clean water for at least two minutes.

Let all items air-dry, do not dry them with a tea towel.

Any kitchen items made of iron will probably be rusted or will soon rust. Remove any existing rust by scouring with steel wool or, if required, use a wire brush followed by the steel wool. After scouring and sanitising iron items, season them with a little cooking oil before use.

Before storing kitchen equipment make sure that the cupboards and food preparation surfaces are clean and sanitised: wash, rinse and bleach.

KITCHEN CUPBOARDS

Most modern kitchen cupboards are made of chipboard, which is not a material that does well in floods. Any cupboards that have been under or even standing in water for any period of time will just expand like a sponge and soon collapse. Archicentre recommends that you don't waste money trying to repair these cupboards, just replace them.

If your cupboards are solid timber, check, just in case, because many cupboard systems that are sold as solid timber use chipboard shelves and/or backing. In this case the chipboard components will need to be replaced.

Other cupboards use plywood extensively. If the plywood is of good quality (marine grade) and has been well painted or protected, check that it has not warped. If it has, replace it as fixed warped ply has a tendency to pull apart or return to its warped state. If the ply is not marine ply, you can expect extensive damage. Most of the industry representatives I contacted suggested to completely replace the cupboards as the ply will never really recover from the water damage and extensive paint damage can be expected later.

If you decide to replace the kitchen cupboards, don't rush into it. Make sure that the walls and floor are very dry as chipboard-type cupboards act like sponges and quickly absorb any water available, including that in the slab or wall, and this will quickly destroy your new cupboards.

If the existing cupboards are to remain, they must be sanitised before you use them. The first step is to inspect them and look for deep splits and scratches. If you find any, either replace the timber concerned, or use some form of sealing compound such as clear polyester to seal the wood. Please note this must be done after the wood is totally dry. The next step is to wash the surfaces very well with a hot detergent solution, followed by at least two rinses using clear cold water (with a change of water between each rinse). Finally sanitise them using a solution of two tablespoons of liquid household bleach to a 4.5 litres of water.

I recommend that you use some form of liner as well, to make sure that nothing can leach into your food directly or via food preparation utensils.

Next time, the final article in this series, how to rescue your important documents.

A Golden Opportunity

by Bruce Dunn, Blackalls Park, NSW.

Several years ago Bruce Dunn wrote about the fulfilment of his long-held dream to travel on the Indian Pacific. Now another dream has come true for Bruce and Margaret.

Some years ago I concluded my story about travelling on the Indian Pacific from Sydney to Perth by expressing a wish to travel from south to north on the Ghan. Finally, in February 2004, the inaugural month of the new service from Adelaide to Darwin, Margaret and I were lucky enough to realise this dream.

We had been hearing of progress being made on the new section of track from Alice Springs to Darwin for so many years that we doubted whether it would in fact be finished during our lifetime. The publicity surrounding this historic event when it actually did happen was such as to make us think it would be many months before a booking was available to us. Our golden wedding anniversary was approaching and we wanted to do something to celebrate it in appropriate style. A chance enquiry at a travel agency revealed two vacancies just three weeks away. This seemed like our golden opportunity, but could we slot it in with previous commitments on such short notice?

A check of our diary found that we could fit the trip in between our first granddaughter's wedding and a minor surgical procedure. Several close acquaintances of a similar age to us had recently died so we were very aware that the present is the only time we're sure of having. The decision was made.

It is some months now since we made the trip, but our minds are full of memories and experiences we will always treasure. We saw the Red Centre, and it is red, and we walked on its crunchy gravel surface. We experienced the searing forty-degree-plus heat of the Alice. We journeyed to the famous Katherine Gorge and found it in full flow. I think Katherine flooded two days later, stopping road traffic, but not the legendary Ghan. We observed the changes in scenery as we went further north: the red landscape giving way to small green shrubs, then more and more large shrubs and trees the closer we got to Darwin.

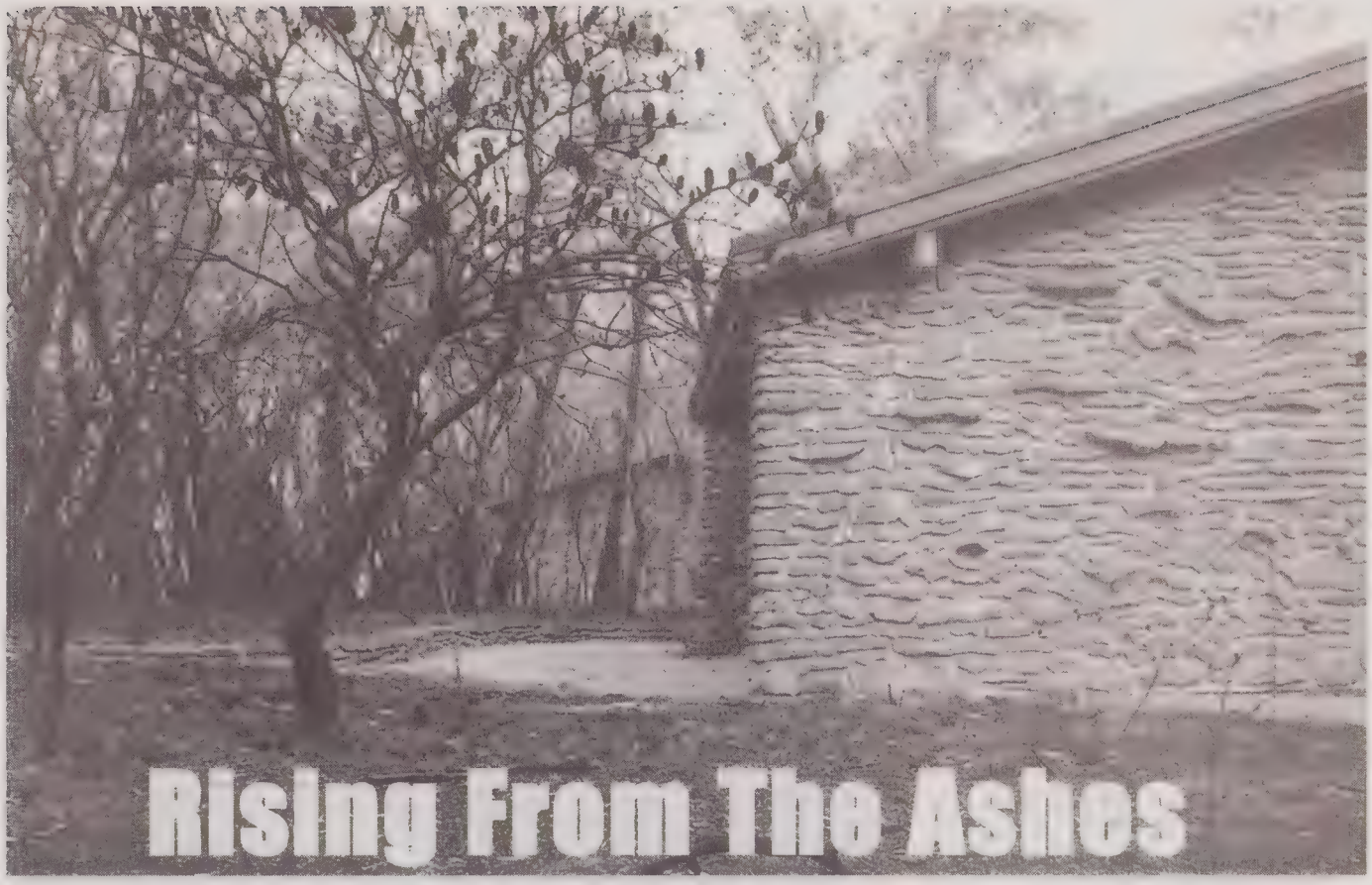
Bruce and Margaret get ready to board the Ghan and explore the Red Centre in comfort.

The camaraderie of fellow travellers from all over the world, as well as many Aussies, was a highlight. Some Americans shared confidences with us on how they viewed the Canadians, and then the next day we heard opposite views on how Canadians viewed Americans. We think we did our bit for world peace by keeping these confidences to ourselves, or perhaps those world travellers were stringing two gullible Aussies along. Encouraging other nationalities to experience their first taste of Vegemite was a laugh. I spread it generously on my own toast, but a stern look from Margaret warned me to give the overseas tourists a mere smear on theirs. Reactions were mixed. Altogether it was a joyous journey.

Would we do it again? This time the answer is in the negative. We've taken the trips we long dreamed of and are not interested in world travel. We are proud to count ourselves among the numbers of people who have traversed our continent from side to side and from bottom to top.

My advice to other retired pensioners, for that is what we are, is not to spend your money on pokies, scratchies, ciggies or grog. Save it up and spend your children's inheritance on exploring our vast land. Our four adult children, themselves parents, kept prompting us time and time again to use the money on ourselves, so we complied. We definitely recommend the Red Centre and the Top End to other retired travellers, and the train services make the journeys easy and pleasurable.

Readers might be interested in knowing why we considered this trip was a fitting memento of our golden wedding anniversary. The accommodation we booked was called the 'Gold Kangaroo Service'. Simple really.



Rising From The Ashes

by Sue Olsen, Blackheath, NSW.

I kept walking around our land looking for signs of life the day after the fire. Our familiar environment had been devastated in one fear-filled afternoon. The trees were black, the shrubs had gone and the earth was covered in grey ash. Looking across the valley we could see the landforms where before we'd been mostly aware of forest and shrubs, and the fragile hanging swamps were clearly visible as patches of scorched earth. At night frogs croaked in an ash-strewn dam, among scorched rushes, by the burnt-out pump.

The fire started in the Megalong Valley on 5 December 2002 and quickly spread up to the cliff line. When the wind picked up it burnt down into the water catchment and into the Grand Canyon at Blackheath. Our property of 29 acres of mostly natural bushland is above the canyon and received the full force of the fire. Solid, windowless stone walls facing the west helped save the house and our two bush cabins, but the land itself was black and lifeless.

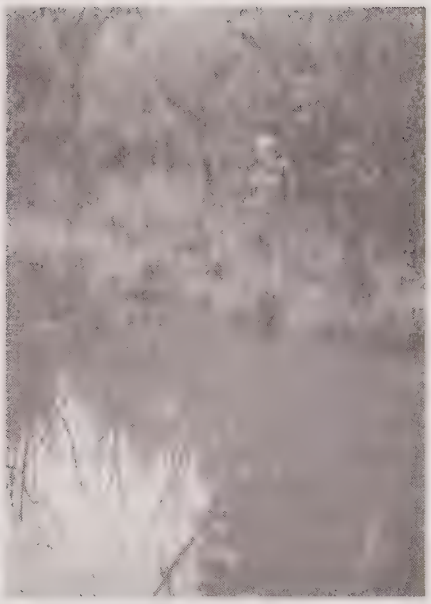
Two days after the fire I walked down to the end of our land where it drops into the canyon. The ground was still hot in places, in spite of a light fall of rain, and rocky outcrops were black. The heath had all gone, although some mallees above the deepest part of the canyon had survived with a singeing. Nothing was left of our hanging swamp with its rare plants and it would be years before the masses of boronia regrew.

However, even during the first week I saw signs of life returning: a king parrot splashing its brightness at ravaged trunks of eucalypts; butterflies chasing each other through blackened sticks; and a lyrebird, with a great shimmering tail, staging a song and dance act right next to the shed. Isopogons provided spots of colour with their deep pink seeds and banksia and hakea pods opened, shedding their seeds onto the scorched earth.

Up near the vegetable garden a piece of our history had been lost. The old caravan was burnt to the wheels and its windows were piles of molten globs amongst the twisted frame. This timber van had been our passport to freedom from the city. I remember it sitting on the grass outside our suburban cottage waiting to be towed to Blackheath, where we would live with our two small children while we built our own home from bush rock gathered from our land.

In the vegetable garden baked apples hung on sizzled trees and roasted lettuces sat sadly in the ashes. Bower birds, which we usually cursed for pinching apples, were looking for food, and I weakened and bought them apples from the fruit shop. My tame thrush was back too, begging for cheese by flying through the windchimes to gain attention.

By 14 December, nine days after the fire, spots of green had appeared as sedges and grasses popped through bare ground and grass trees had bright green skirts growing from black cores. In the vegetable garden rhubarb and spinach were sprouting from their frizzled bases. In the dam rushes were



Ian by the dam, spring 2005.

Grass tree rising from the ashes.

Sue with waratahs coming into flower.

flowering. At night the moon was a great shining ball, silhouetting our blackened sticks of trees.

On 18 December black cockatoos called to each other in the mist and drank at the dam. I saw a tree creeper, but little birds were mostly absent because of lack of cover. Light showers of rain encouraged growth of tiny plants and a huge toadstool rose defiantly from the ashes. Mist drifted through skeletons of branches, creating an eerily beautiful landscape.

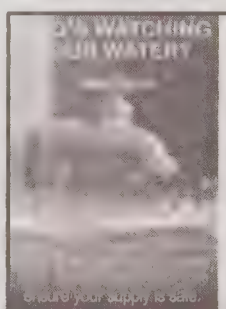
On the last day of December as I sat by the dam in late afternoon a fat wonga pigeon came waddling through the mangled fence to have a drink, while magnificent cockatoos screeched and swooped above me. There was no sign of The Fish, our great survivor. Several years previously we'd put a number of trout fingerlings in the small dam and this fish had outlived them all.

By 1 January the eucalypt trunks were beginning to sprout. What a miracle this epicormic growth is in our fire-adapted country. Thick fire-resistant bark on most eucalypts and some other native trees has the ability to produce 'epicormic' shoots from dormant buds beneath the bark on trunks and branches. The new leaves are red at first and look beautiful against black trunks. Most of the *Eucalyptus piperita* and *E. sieberi* were sprouting, but the *E. oreades* in the gully would not recover. It has thin bark and received the full heat of the fire. Mountain devils (*Lambertia formosa*) were sprouting from their bases and ferns were appearing. Brown leaves fallen from the trees softened the harshness of grey earth. By the end of January epicormic growth had turned to green and new life had taken hold.

Over the next 12 months we watched the progress of regrowth and renewal at Kinie-ger and by spring 2003 our land was looking green again, although with little undergrowth. Magpies were warbling and feasting on insects and some small birds began returning once the multi-trunked Blue Mountains mallee (*E. stricta*) was regenerating. There were few flowers yet except for clusters of tiny white and pink orchids. Blue sun orchids soon rose in profusion and red gum tips shone in the sunlight.

One evening in late spring 2003 I was sitting by the dam with a glass of wine. Green rushes were nodding gently when a speckled streak moved through the water. The Fish was alive. This fish had survived stagnant water and meagre food supplies and had been frozen over on bleak winter days. Now he'd survived a bushfire. I gazed around at fresh new eucalypt leaves and other vegetation, had another sip of wine, and contemplated the truth of the saying 'life longs for itself and will rise again from almost any catastrophe'.

As I write in 2006, the undergrowth is filling out, sedges are thriving and masses of spectacular waratahs (*Telopea speciosissima*) are blooming.



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WHAT'S ON

HUNTER VALLEY QUILTS

Feel like combining quilting with some wine tasting? Head to the Hunter Valley in April then. The Quilts of the Hunter exhibition is being held at Tomago House, Tomago Rd, Tomago, from 29 April to 1 May. It's open from 11 am to 4 pm. Contact Lesley Marshall, ph: 02-4959-3016.

HERB CONFERENCE

Herb growers and devotees might like to venture up to the 10th Australian Herb Conference, on from 5 to 8 May. The conference is hosted by the Peninsula Herb Group, who invite everyone to 'Come, spend some thyme with us'. Isabell Shipard and Ross McKinnon will be guest speakers. It's at the Margate Conference Centre, 24 Beaconsfield St, Margate Beach, Redcliffe Peninsula, Queensland. For more information, visit the website at www.clearsoft.com.au/herbconference

AG FIELD DAYS

Autumn is field day time; those rurally inclined might like to check out these agricultural fests. Agro-Trend is in Bundaberg, Queensland, on 4 – 6 May, call 07-4153-3955, or go to website www.agrotrend.com.au

The Ag-Fest Rural Trade Fair has over 700 exhibitors and is on in Launceston, Tasmania, on 4 – 6 May, ph: 03-6334-0262, or try www.agfest.com.au

The Tocal Field Days event is renowned for quality education, demonstrations and talks. It's held in Paterson, NSW, on 5 – 7 May this year. Ph: 02-4939-8888, or www.tocal.com

In Victoria, the Murray Downs Field Day has the latest farm equipment and machinery, and is at Swan Hill on 9 – 10 May, ph: 03-5032-3033.

FENG SHUI FOR ME

If you enjoyed the Feng Shui gardening article, you might like to find out more. Jodi Brunner of the Feng Shui Research Centre presents a number of different Feng Shui courses, including Chinese face reading seminars on 8 and 9 April and business Feng Shui on 29 and 30 April, among others. Go to www.fengshuimaster.com.au

GROW ORGANIC 2006

On from 20 to 21 May, Grow Organic is a friendly get-together for anyone interested in organics, featuring speakers, workshops and great organic food. Topics include soils, greenhouse and agriculture, profitable small farms, organic retailing, pigs and lots more. It's at Camp Coolamatong, Banksia Peninsula, via Bairnsdale, Victoria. Ph: 03-5157-1586. Organised by the Organic Agriculture Association Inc.

ABC GARDEN EXPO

Brisbane green thumbs, take note: the ABC Gardening Australia Expo will take place at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre on 19 – 21 May. It's a huge event and worth checking out as the show is usually environmentally friendly. Peter Cundall will be about to answer questions and there'll be plenty of free professional gardening advice, stalls and displays. Go to abc.net.au/gardening/gardening_live

BIG CRAFT AND QUILT FAIR

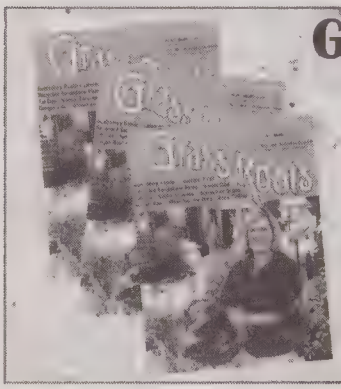
It's got everything: quilting, patchwork, embroidery, scrapbooking, spinning and weaving, tapestry, paper crafts, knitting, appliqué, beading and more – whatever your craft passion, it's at the fair. There's also information, education, inspiration and products. The Craft and Quilt Fair is on in Hobart on 6 – 9 April, at the Derwent Entertainment Centre, then goes to Perth on 24 – 28 May, at Perth Exhibition Centre. Go online to www.craftfair.com.au or for general enquiries call 02-9452-7575.

WORKING HORSES FESTIVAL

Victoria's first farm will come alive with a celebration of heritage farming. Step back in time to see Clydesdale horses from around Australia strutting their stuff ploughing, hay making, dam building and more over Easter weekend, 15 – 16 April, at Churchill Island, Victoria, accessible by bridge from Phillip Island. Go to www.penguins.org.au

MEET SOME SHEEP

The 19th Annual Strong Wool Sheep and Wool Fair will be held at Benalla Showgrounds on Sunday 7 May. Romney and Drysdale sheep are the feature breeds this year, with exhibits from Border Leicester, English Leicester, Lincoln, Perendale and Cheviot sheep. The Fair is a great opportunity for 'would be' sheep breeders to talk freely with those more experienced. There's also a fleece competition and craft and photography sections. Schedules and information from Madelon Foletta, 03-5782-0412.



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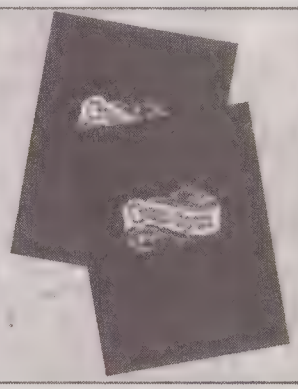


ROUND THE MARKET PLACE

We hope you enjoy this feature introducing new products relevant to readers' lifestyles and interests.

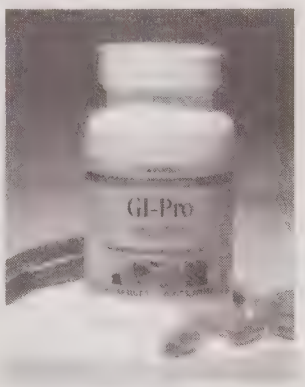
FLEXIBLE RUBBER PAVERS

Each year in Australia about 170,000 tonnes of waste is generated from used tyres, the equivalent of 18 million passenger vehicle tyres. Over half of these go to landfill and an estimated 13 percent are illegally dumped. Since 1978 Flexitec Rubber Surfaces, a division of Tyre Recyclists P/L, has been recycling tyre waste into a range of rubber crumb products for use in rubber moulding, road construction, adhesives and rubberised surfaces. New equipment installed in 1995 enabled the manufacture of rubber pavers for a range of indoor and outdoor applications. Products include solid pavers for use in gymnasiums, walkways and patios; drainage pavers for high wear or wet sites; Fallsafe, which is certified for use under playground equipment; a cobbled surface for landscaping or deterring skateboarders; and a range of matting specially designed for use in stables. Flexitec meets the 'Good Environmental Choice' labelling standard.

Contact Bruce Pomeroy, Flexitec, 10 Kimberley Rd, Dandenong 3175. Ph: 03-9706-6606. Email: brucepomeroy@flexitec.com.au

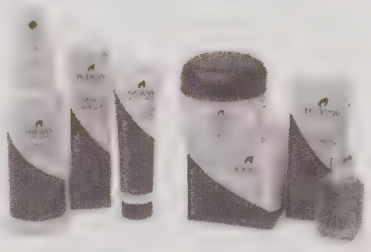
INTESTINAL HEALTH

Beneficial microflora in the intestinal tract, known as probiotics, are essential for maintaining good digestive health and good health generally. Stress, antibiotics, antacids, alcohol and poor diet can destroy probiotics and allow the proliferation of harmful bacteria, which can have far-reaching effects on the body. Mannatech's new probiotic, GI-Pro®, contains over 12 billion microorganisms in each capsule, along with prebiotics that feed the probiotics and keep them viable longer. These beneficial bacteria increase nutrient absorption, strengthen the immune system, produce B vitamins, support liver function, normalise bowel health, prevent intestinal tract infections and assist in cholesterol management. GI-Pro® retails for $39 per 30 capsules.



For details about stockists ph: 02-8437-7433. Website: www.mannatech.com

RENEW FOR HANDS AND NAILS



Renew Skincare, well known for its organic rosehip oil, is a father and daughter company launched in 2000. The product range includes moisturiser, cleansers, body scrub, eye serum, rosewater mist, shampoo and conditioner, plus the recently released hand and nail cream. All products contain botanical extracts and essential oils, are free from synthetic fragrances, colours, parabens and sodium lauryl sulphate, and are claimed to be top quality at an affordable price. The new hand and nail cream nourishes the skin and strengthens the cuticles while providing a protective barrier. It has a pleasant natural aroma of tangerine and grapefruit. Renew Skincare Hand And Nail Cream is available at pharmacies and health foodstores nationwide and retails for $8.95 per 100 millilitre tube.

For more information ph: 1300-663-142. Website: www.renewskincare.com

NEW RAMMED EARTH TECHNOLOGY

Two Aussie small businesses have combined expertise to pioneer a breakthrough in rammed earth building. Tech-Dry and Earth Structures have developed a water-based silicon material that enables rammed earth structures to be integrally water repellant, and thus more durable. The environmentally friendly silicon material is incorporated at a rate of half a kilogram per tonne when the earth and cement are being mixed. It adds about $9 per tonne to the cost of building. It is a water-based nontoxic product with no final migration of any residue into the building environment, so should be safe for those with chemical sensitivities. A stunning example of the new technology can be seen at the TarraWarra Museum of Art near Healesville in Victoria. The structure has been designed as an earth sculpture rising from the natural landscape. The new technology will ensure the durability of the earth walls while maintaining the beauty of the natural earthy appearance.

For details ph: 03-9699-8202 or email:info@techdry.com.au

CONTROL WATER FLOW

A simple way to reduce home water consumption is to install a water flow control valve that reduces the flow with minimal loss of pressure. The Nylex Flomasta™ is a self-calibrating valve that monitors the water pressure and automatically adjusts itself many times per second to control the water flow. Other associated products include flow control discs to regulate water flow in existing shower heads, inline flow regulators to regulate flow in existing shower heads and basin fittings, aerators that reduce flow from taps while increasing perception of water volume, flood stop safety valves that prevent flooding from a burst hose in a front-loading washing machine or dishwasher, and a toilet water saving kit that allows the toilet to flush only as long as the button is held down. All FloMasta™ products are reasonably priced and available wherever Nylex products are sold.

For details ph: 1300-138-265. Website: www.nylexwater.com.au

RECENT RELEASES

Titles described can be ordered through your nearest bookstore.

LIVING THE GOOD LIFE
How one family changed their world from their own backyard
Linda Cockburn

Ah, imagine having almost no bills. Linda, husband Trevor and son Caleb's quest was to survive self-sufficiently for six months by living sustainably on their 2180-square-metre block. (They did have to spend $20,000 on a solar setup, water tanks, composting toilet, animals and garden, however.) They ran into a few hurdles: the drought, fruit fly, a lack of wine and chocolate and the goat (it's always the goat), but also enjoyed the challenge and improved their health enormously. The book is set out as a six-month diary, and entries include recipes and information sections on various topics like rain harvesting, gardening, toilet alternatives, measuring electricity and the like. If you are wondering how successful they were, well, we won't spoil the ending.

P/b, 276pp, Hardie Grant Books, 85 High St, Prahran 3181. Ph: 03-8520-6444. RRP: $29.95.

HOW CAN I GROW AND USE SPROUTS AS LIVING FOOD?
Isabell Shipard

Sprouts are live, easily digested food containing many essential and balanced nutrients, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals. RR never knew there were so many types – Isabell profiles over 100, including the ever popular wheat grass. She also discusses the various methods of sprouting. A major advantage of sprouts is how easy they are to grow – all you need is several glass jars, some netting and some rubber bands and you have a constant supply. You'll find a multitude of recipes and suggestions for using them in the kitchen too.

P/b, 136pp, DB Stewart, c/- Shipard's Herb Farm, PO Box 66, Nambour 4560. Email: info@herbsarespecial.com.au. RRP: $39.00 plus p&h $9.90.

TUCKER TRACK
The curious history of food in Australia
Warren Fahey

This is a highly enjoyable meander through yesteryear that will bring back memories for many readers. Fahey has compiled a quirky, informative and entertaining treasury of Aussie culinary traditions, including anecdotes about how lamingtons got their name, who Granny Smith was, the words to 'Two Bad Mutton Pies', and the recipe for lemon sago pudding, among many many others. Fahey's own reminiscences are interspersed throughout entries, and perhaps a few personal assumptions – for example there is a definition of toast (grilled sliced bread), but not dripping (what on earth is dripping? asks RR, born in 1974). Multicultural contributions are well covered, and our reactions to them, and the real bush recipes, such as kangaroo tail, are lots of fun. A plate of bush oysters anyone?

P/b, 312pp, ABC Books, GPO Box 9994, Sydney 2001. Ph: 1300-360-111. RRP: $27.95.

INSTANT EXPERTS BEADING
Lucinda Ganderton

If you are inspired to get into beading, here's a good place to begin. This spiral-bound book is in three parts: a short but interesting history of beading, relevant materials and equipment, and last, techniques and projects made out of beads. Although there is plenty of jewellery to make, also included are light pulls, embroidery, cushions, napkin holders, mobiles and even a chandelier. The bright, clear photos are excellent and show all relevant steps.

H/b, 192pp, Five Mile Press, c/- Bookwise International, 174 Cormack Rd, Wingfield 5013. Ph: 08-8268-8222. RRP: $29.95.

PRUNING HANDBOOK
Fiona Hopes

Get your secateurs sharpened; here's the book to get you ready to tackle any pruning job. This is a comprehensive guide, covering over 80 trees, shrubs and climbers. Its strength is in the beautifully drawn diagrams of how and where to prune each individual species. Where appropriate, variations are given, such as an example of a really hard prune of a photinia in late spring, and a gentler prune for autumn. As well as the drawings there is a page of photos for every plant. The chapter on principles and techniques is also useful.

P/b, 192pp, Hachette Illustrated, c/- Bookwise International, 174 Cormack Rd, Wingfield 5013. Ph: 08-8268-8222. RRP: $29.95.

THE DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY HANDBOOK
Doug Harman

While one of a digital camera's strengths is that you can delete any pictures that haven't turned out well, this book will help you take more that do. Find out about computers and printers; when to use high and low resolution, a very important tool if you intend to enlarge your photos; and when you shouldn't use a flash. It's not too technical, information is presented in easily digestible chunks, it's well illustrated, and there are many useful general photography tips too.

P/b, 224pp, ABC Books, GPO Box 9994, Sydney 2001. Ph: 1300-360-111. RRP: $19.95.

DOWN HOME ON THE FARM

by Megg Miller.

Some weeks are not as good as others, but this one has been awful. No, not the weather for once; it's those rotten foxes. Feed time yesterday morning I opened the door of a pen and found my three best Faverolles dead in the corner. 'Oh my God', I said aloud, 'what's happened?'. It was pretty clear on closer examination that a fox or a phascogale had been at work, but there was no sign of digging or ripping of netting and the door was still securely closed. There has always been a gap of around eight or nine centimetres between the door and the wall and the fox must have been a young one, just able to squeeze in. The hen he ripped into had been setting and some of the eggs were smashed and an eggshell left on the ground outside the pen, so really, after feasting on Fifi and eating partly incubated eggs, you'd have thought the fox would have been too full to fit through the gap. The other hen and the lovely rooster were untouched and must have died of fright.

Faverolles are pretty, placid and no trouble in the garden, no wonder the fox likes them.

Faverolles are placid birds, but not very bright, so they are wonderful in a garden. They potter around, sneak in a dust bath where they shouldn't, and that's about it. I was looking forward to relocating them into town as I recently purchased some sheds and just needed to furnish them with perches and nests and exclude the sparrows. I know I'm going on, but next to Fifi's pen was another with crossbred Faverolles. Did the fox eliminate them? Despite the fact this shed also had a gap between door and wall, no. He chose the best. I would love to know how foxes can work out which birds are the favourites or most valuable because nine times out of ten they're the ones that are preyed on and ravaged. Rotten stinkers! All my free-ranging birds have disappeared, with the exception of two old hens and four old guineas. Everything else is locked in, even the geese, and it's a very quiet farmlet without the geese honking cheekily or roosters boasting about their day.

The town chooks have known little about the drama of farm living, as most were bought from acquaintances and taken there rather than back to the farm. It's been a safety measure for minimising disease, but also to ensure that if the worst happened at one property there would be a few purebreds left to go on with. I'll be able to threaten them when they do something undesirable that if their behaviour doesn't improve they'll go to the farm and risk the big bad fox.

'Why don't you get another dog?' friends ask. It's hard enough finding the time to do justice to the poultry; there wouldn't be enough hours in the day to train a dog and give it the companionship it would need. As well, I'm a cat rather than a dog person by nature. Visits to see Suni and Marcie and their two moggies are a joy and the cats love my luggage because of the farm smells on it. Over New Year my old black cat died, after two decades of fussy eating and keeping the bed warm at night. Tabby her friend is also about 20 and now lonely, so has adopted a stray tom for company. I'm sure Tabby thinks the quality of feed has dropped now the black cat isn't around to create a fuss. 'No more cats after Tabby', I say when offered kittens, but hopefully this little farm cat has a few more years ahead.

Marcel might think the tanks are low and the grass dry at his and Suni's weekender, but when I call by I'm amazed at how green it appears. In fact, I often call by and cut some of their grass for my poultry as the countryside is drier still half an hour away. The hot winds have caused casualties in the garden, so there are quite a few spaces needing new shrubs. I love my cottage garden, but I'm not prepared to spend hours watering it of a summer's night, so the new lot of plants have to be drought tolerant first and foremost and then have attractive or interesting features.

The hot winds totally devastated the berry plants in the vegie garden and burnt leaves on the young fruit trees as well as the tomatoes. For the first time in years I've had to buy lettuce and I'm only now ready to harvest zucchinis. You can't do everything, I know, but I have missed the pleasure of going out and picking salad greens and eating them garden fresh. Now autumn is imminent I can get back into the garden and sow crops for the months ahead.

It may have been just as well I haven't spent a lot of time in the vegie

garden. Several weeks ago I detected a 'dead' smell towards the back of the garden. I'd get a whiff at night when I was filling buckets for the fowls' water bowls and decided something must have died in the paddock behind my place. I finally found the origin of the odour, a 1.7-metre long brown snake caught up in the netting for the strawberries. How distressing to think this poor fellow was stuck there, unable to get free in the hot weather. And how nerve-racking to think he was skulking about the vegie garden, especially as I usually do a lot of work after dark. The plan this winter will be to tidy up some of the heaps of old wood that are round the place so the snakes don't think I'm offering a home away from home.

What I have been doing on hot days is sewing. After letting the dust get centimetres thick on the sewing machine I dusted it off, plugged it in and reread the manual as I'd totally forgotten about threading procedures and bobbins. What fun to sit there and hear the machine purring along. Suni has a brand new sewing machine and wants some tips for using it. Despite the fact I was a sewing teacher years and years ago, I felt rusty, so decided the best way to jog my memory was to get out the trusty old machine and relearn what lack of practice had dimmed. I've patched torn shirts and mended garments that have been waiting for help for so long they're out of fashion. The next project is making up some simple curtains and then I'll feel confident enough to try the new machine. Suni is sure to enjoy her new toy once she masters the basics.

Scrambling around in boxes looking for sewing gear, I discovered my spinning stick. It's a little like a spindle, except it's just got a nail a centimetre in from the end and it's twisted by holding it horizontally and not vertically, as for a spindle. 'Blast', I thought. 'The sheep has just been shorn and I didn't put a request in for a few handfuls of wool!' I'm sure to find some, everyone locally has sheep, but the fleece from my own girl was quite long, so would have been ideal for a lapsed spinner. Sheepie received VIP treatment and was picked up at home and delivered back to the paddock gate. My neighbour generously tolerates this pet sheep and turned up early in the morning with a piece of bread. The sheep wasn't going to be sucked in like that; she knows when men appear at her paddock there is sure to be trouble ahead. I was able to lure her into a shed and lock her up, but the neighbour wasn't taking any chances and turned up with the ute and two burly helpers. She's a cooler sheep now, but does look rather plump, especially alongside the Merino wethers next door. 'No lollies', said the neighbour, no doubt meaning chook feed. 'Baa', she says disdainfully when I offer lettuce leaves. I suppose they aren't as tasty as layer pellets or stale bread.

Although the months have sped by since New Year, I'm hoping the mellow autumn weather will provide the incentive and time to get outdoor jobs done that are long overdue. There are turkey sheds to clean and old chook houses to pull down, in fact, the list is pretty much the same as it was a year ago. You can but do your best, there is always another day or another week. I'd better not push the another year bit or I may find there is a huge backlog of years and years of work. There is nothing like poor eyesight – you can't see the dust, the cobwebs or the list. Time to enjoy the sun and the chooks and a good coffee, the list will be waiting tomorrow.

PENPALS

Hi, I am 60 years old and would like penpals 40 to 60. My hobbies are fishing, gardening, country and western music. I'm widowed and lonely.

Alan Percival,
6 South St, GRENFELL 2810

I am a female, successfully overcoming chemical sensitivity. Would like to correspond with others who enjoy growing unsprayed vegetables and fruit and using natural means to improve their health.

Paula,
RSD 117B, FCS, KINGSCOTE 5223.

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GRASSIFIEDS

HOW TO ADVERTISE

- Use form provided below, or a separate sheet of paper.
- Print ad clearly, **not in block capitals**, with correct punctuation.
- If more than one ad please print each one on a separate page.
- Remember to include an address or phone number in your ad.
- Count number of words and multiply by 85 cents per word (phone number counted as one word) to work out total cost. Add $15 for photo.
- Send **with payment** to Grass Roots, PO Box 117, Seymour 3661, before the deadline and we'll include your ad in the next issue.

Deadline for GR 175 is 28 April, 2006. Please do not fax ads.

Sender's Name ..... For issues no/s .....

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Cost for advertisements is 85c per word

PROPERTY FOR SALE

NEW SOUTH WALES

HALF HOUR FROM WINDSOR, RICHMOND: 20 ac, about half deep rich loam & half treed. 'Never been dry crk' running through, 18 bearing f/trees 4 – 5 yrs old. Livable weekender with power & ph connected, lge Colorbond shed. $380,000. Ph: owner, 02-4575-5242, 0408-167-690.

BOMBALA, SOUTH-EAST NSW: 271.9 ha with 3.5 km river frontage, undulating country, cleared & natural bush, 3 b/r comfortable w/b house, shearing shed & yards, 1 ha lavender plantation. Property has subdivision potential & is only 2 km from town centre. Bombala is a quiet friendly town with good facilities & close to the coast. $720,000. PW Reid R/E. Ph: 02-6239-6698. Website: www.reid-realty.com/mundarrangong

Bombala

NYMBOIDA RIVERSIDE: rare sml acreage. Quality hardwood house, 10 sq, 3 b/r. All mod cons, flood-safe, privacy. Excellent pony paddock. School bus. Grafton 30 mins. $205,000. Ph: 02-6649-4922.

ALTERNATIVE SUSTAINABLE LIVING AT ITS FINEST: Nestled on the northern slopes of the picturesque artisan village of Candelo, close to Bega & the coast. Panoramic views of the surrounding hills & spectacular mtns that will never be built out. This spacious 5 b/rs upstairs has a passive solar aspect. Established permaculture gardens & a northern netted orchard with organic berries & 20 f/trees. Council approved greywater system that nurtures organic f/trees. Well-planned layout of this dual-occupancy dwelling. Purpose-built mirrored dance studio with cypress pine floors. $350,000. Ph: Pauline, 0438-932-610. Email: spiral@asitis.net.au

TWENTY KILOMETRES WEST OF WOOLGOOLGA BEACHES: 90 ac subtropical r/forest, 20 ac cleared, 90 persimmon, 100 nashi pears, extensive irrigation gravity feed from lge dam, 1 km of crk frontage with pumping licence. Shed, 12 x 6.5, converted for living, 28 ft c/van with verandah. Power & ph. $320,000. Ph: 02-6649-0954 or 0407-482-858.

All ads on these pages are accepted at the discretion of the publishers.

VILLAGE LIFE AT ITS BEST in picturesque Candelo, sth coast, NSW. Reduce dependence on the car, walking distance to school & shops, village infrastructure & absolutely idyllic Olympic swimming pool. A wonderful community gives security for a family. Five b/r, 2 bathroom w/b house, newly renovated & total rebuild inside. On 2 ac, 3 approved titles within the village boundary. Plenty of space & very fertile soils for gardens, f/trees, house cow or pony or potential for sml eco development. Very private with outlook over rolling hills & farmland. Twenty mins from beach. Permaculture design avail. Priced at $355,000 the lot or house on 1 block $275,000. Ph: 0428-256-942, 02-6495-7722.

GRAFTON, NORTHERN NSW: 40 ac, fenced, 4 b/r home on banks of Clarence River, well above flood level, 15 mins to Grafton city, with all amenities, supermarkets, infrastructure. Swimming pool, granny flat, 3-car garage, wide river & scenery views, wide verandahs. Peaceful, quiet, inspirational ambience, architect-designed hideaway luxury. $525,000. Ph: Real Estate, 02-6643-2455, Kevin or Stan.

DORRIGO PLATEAU, NSW: 250 ac with house, tall hardwood forest from ridge top to Nymboida River frontage. Two extra dwellings with workshops. Permanent crk, 25 km sealed rd Dorrigo, school bus, 1 hr to beach. Not logged, extensive wildlife, r/forest gully, good access & infrastructure, very beautiful. $650,000. Ph: owner, 0427-578-027.

GRASSIFIEDS

PROPERTY FOR SALE

NEW SOUTH WALES

BEAUTIFUL TWEED VALLEY, 5 ha share on approved multiple occupancy, views of Border Ranges. Excellent potential nursery with frontage on tourist route. Previously used for organic sml crops. Colorbond shed, r/water tanks, shadehouse, dam, house site, mostly cleared. $130,000. 30 mins to Murwillumbah or to Nimbin. Ph: 02-6679-3602, Tyalgum.

BEGA VALLEY, NSW: Potential & opport on 370 ac. Scenic, peaceful property, lovely aspect, lovely trees, history & character. Private but close to main facilities. Large homestead, 2nd cottage, dairy, studio & storage shed, workshop with vehicle bays, barn, more sheds & an 1860s pioneer slab hut. Independent water. Gently undulating. Five mins Candelo, 15 mins Bega, 30 mins coast. Would suit multiple occupancy, organic farming, family or friends combine. Integrated livestock & horticulture. Currently registered dairy, could convert for goats or sheep. Endless possibilities & the land & water to make a viable, sustainable, self-supporting enterprise. $950,000. Ph: 02-6493-2273.

Bega Valley

VICTORIA

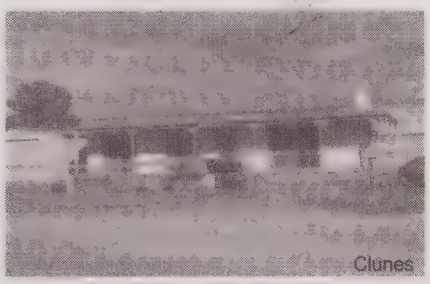
HOUSE AND SEMI-DETACHED UNIT AND SHARES, Mt Murrindal Co-operative, Wtree, Buchan, East Gippsland: Mt Murrindal is a lifestyle co-op (incl 4 other dwellings). Magnificent views. Large solid brick home, 2 lge b/rs, spacious open plan living area, kitchen, pantry, gas stove, office, storage room, 2 toilets, bathroom, laundry, central heating (wood or gas) & s/c heater, c/port, garage. Rainwater tank, 20,000 gal, cement. Unit: 3 b/rs, living room, kitchen, 2 toilets, bathroom, central heating or electric. Ideal for B & B or retreat. Shared organic vegie garden, fruit orchard, chickens, lge dams. 120 ac adjoining state forest, lots of great bushwalking & other outdoor activities. $175,000 incl shares. (Also avail shares w/out dwelling.) Ph: 03-5159-4231, mobile 0421-494-122.

ONE HUNDRED ACRES AT CABBAGE TREE, beautiful forest, plentiful wildlife in wet area, 2 mudbrick houses, very secluded with easy rd access, perm crk water supply, estab orchard & gardens, 20 mins east Orbost, 15 mins from unspoilt coast. $250,000. Ph: for pics via email on 03-5158-1237.

DEADLINES: GR 175 - 28 APRIL
GR 176 – 29 JUNE

FOR SALE, PYRENEES RANGES: 20 magic ac lost in the forest. Suit naturist, naturalist, hideout or hideaway. No permits, foot access only. Hut, water tank. $36,000. Ph: 03-5343-2597.

GOLD COUNTRY CLUNES: Best value home in Clunes. Two yr old country cottage, 3 b/rs, lounge/dining. Split system heating & cooling. Large block, easy walk to town facilities, incl palliative care unit. Rental return $8320 p/a. $165,000 ONO. Ph: Don, 0408-678-891, or 03-9315-9001.


Clunes

QUEENSLAND

FOR SALE, 350 ACRES: Old dairy farm, original sheds, yards in place. Important environmental corridor. Significant eucalypt & scrub regrowth, nature refuge. Secluded area, 20 mins from Gympie. Boundaries incl perm crk & state forest. Four b/r lowset modern home. New extension requires some finishing touches. Blue gum/crows ash galley-style kitchen, 12 ft ironbark verandah. Main b/r has full size en suite. Gas/elec, wood heater, 2 x 5000 gal water tanks, site for a third tank. Two-bay Colorbond shed. Nature refuge status allows ecologically sound income-producing pursuits. POA. Ph: 07-5484-9164. Email: noreenpk@tpg.com.au or qe@spiderweb.com.au

HOUSE BUILT TO LOCK-UP on 1 ac f/hold block at Kookaburra Park Eco-Village. An opport exists for a handyperson to get into this estab eco-village a short drive from Bundaberg in Qld. This 3 b/r home is built to lock-up stage & only requires finishing off. $135k. Only a few vacant blocks left, $55k each. Call Natasha on 07-4153-1303 for more details. Website: www.kp.eco-village.com.au

FOR SALE, ONE ACRE BLOCK rural residential at Ayton, Bloomfield River, Qld. Power & ph avail. $75,000. Ph: 07-4060-8150.

PHOTOS FOR GRASSIES
A 5.5 x 3.5 cm photo costs only $15. Just send a digital jpeg file or real film photo with your ad, or call us on 03-5792-4000.

GAYNDAH FIVE ACRES OF SANDY LOAM on the bank of the Burnet River, this secluded & tranquil property is on a dead-end rd only 4 km from town (3000 population). Enjoy the river view & breeze from the open plan kitchen/dining/lounge area. This highset spacious 3 b/r home has polished floors with natural timber walls, galley-style kitchen with loads of storage space. Enjoy the outdoor living with a lge entertainment area adjoining upstairs with internal staircase, as well as a paved outdoor area set in a well-estab irrigated tropical garden from domestic water license. Two-car parking space, workshop, cubby house, fishponds, chook pen, 5000 gal drinking water, all 1½ hrs to coastal towns. $250,000. Ph: 07-4161-2508.

SUNSHINE COAST HINTERLAND: Organic lifestyle on 2½ ac. Four b/r, highset home + soundproof studio, 80,000 lt r/water storage in tanks, 2 dams (one for swimming with jetty). Dams have high-volume pumps for irrigation, f/trees, native trees under Bushcare program. Entertainment area with wood-fired bread oven, lock-up garage, 2 open c/ports, lge 7.5 x 10 m workshop & sep workshop office. Extensive organic vegie gardens, fully fenced, sml vineyard. School bus outside gate. $520,000. Ph: 07-5485-2022.

INVESTMENT: TWO VERY GOOD HOMES & cabin on 77 ac. Tara (27 km to town, school bus), Chinchilla 47 km. Twenty percent land selectively cleared, remainder gums & pine trees, f/trees, power, water (tanks & dams), very private. $270,000. Ph: 07-4665-3167.

BAFFLE CREEK: CENTURY OLD highset Queenslander on 16 ha (40 ac). French doors, ornate arches, fretwork, stained glass feature windows, 3 m wide verandahs on 3 sides. EPA approved solar system 16 x 60 W panels, 4 x 80 W panels stored in a 110 amp/hr 24V battery bank, 2500 W Selectronic inverter, 5000 gal poly tank, lge dam, 4 x 5 m tool shed, c/van, ride-on mower, building materials. Very private, mins to amenities, crks, nat pks & subtropical beaches. $320,000. Ph: 07-4156-6556. Website: www.organicodyssey.com.au/best

ATHERTON TABLELANDS NATURAL BUSH SETTING: 3 b/r brick home situated 9.5 km from Ravenshoe along the Kennedy Hwy. All b/rs have BIRs, verandahs front & back. Built on 1.574 ha of land with its own crk & water hole. Large shed easily converted to granny flat, 3-bay c/port. $310,000. Ph: Ian or Sharon, 07-4097-7015.

Atherton Tablelands

GRASSIFIEDS

PROPERTY FOR SALE

QUEENSLAND

BEST OF COUNTRY LIVING: 40 fully fenced ac with 2 dams & perm water hole. Modern 3 b/r Hardiplank home with 3 m verandahs on 3 sides, wood heater with open plan living area. Set on a hill overlooking a valley with magnif views on all sides. Double lock-up garage & 4-bay c/port. Established fruit & shade trees, gardens all irrigated. Gravel-filtered septic system. Transportable metal cattle yards. School bus at door, 50 km from Gin Gin, 35 km from Mt Perry. Perfect living away from the hustle & bustle of city life. $235,000. Ph: owner, 07-4156-3012.

STANTHORPE HIGHLANDS: 100 ac virgin bush, 2 homes, big solar, lake, absolute privacy, nat pk. Quality, close town. $375,000, terms. Ph: 07-4683-6121.

SELF-SUFFICIENT TWENTY ACRES, spring water (see article GR 168), solar power, backup generator + brand new steam engine. Two b/r cottage, while you build your dream homestead. Ocean view or valley. Organic market garden (good income). Variety f/trees, coffee plantation, 2 dams, water aplenty. Very secluded. Ormeau – halfway b/ween Gold Coast & Brisbane. Half price @ $500,000. Ph: 07-5546-6735 or 0427-112-014. Lots more to offer.

TASMANIA

KOONYA, TASMAN PENINSULA: Beautiful earth building, wooden workshop & little cottage. Quality, unusual, handmade tiles & woodwork, Mediterranean flair. Fifty park-like & bush ac, crk, great views, 4 km to beach. Good community. Creative person's residence. Very sad to sell. $450,000. Ph: 02-6232-7585.

LORINNA: FIFTEEN ACRES NEAR LAKE CETHANA, 1 hr from Cradle Mtn, 40 mins from Sheffield. Three b/r house, polished floors, wood stove with water jacket. Needs bathroom & toilet built & some work to be completed. Secluded setting, crk 100 m from house with hydro elec. Local community practising sustainable lifestyle practices & organic farming. $105,000. Ph: 07-5429-6623.

PRESTON, THREE-BEDROOM HOME, very private, + 40 ac protected native bush. $155,000. Ph: 03-6425-4324.

Preston

PLACING AN AD?
See page 75 for details

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

WORK FROM HOME: Risk-free mail order, part or f/time, low set-up cost, free info. Ph: 08-9537-7271.

COMMUNITIES/SHARES

LAND SHARE: Share 1 ac on Crystal Waters Permaculture Village, Qld. Prefer spiritual woman, n/s, money to build. Ph: Amber, 07-5494-4739.

FOR RENT/CARETAKER WANTED

EXPERIENCED COUPLE REQUIRED to caretake busy sml farm for 3 weeks in October 2006. The farm runs cattle, sheep, pigs, chooks, ducks, a dog & a cat. Some knowledge of safe tractor operation, pressure pumps & 4 x 4 motor bikes would be an advantage. Duties will incl milking 2 Jersey cows daily, feeding pigs, chooks & ducks, & checking sheep, cattle & water troughs. Our comfortable house is avail for the duration of your stay. Remuneration to be discussed. Apply with references to Helen & Rob, Farm 1006, Egan Rd, COLEAMBALLY, NSW 2707. Ph: 02-6954-1221 after 7pm for more details.

THE DANDENONGS, VIC, TOWN CENTRE, self-cont flatette, sep entrance, as furnished. Rent-free period to responsible handyperson for assistance to p/time resident caretaker on private home site. Suit active mid-aged person with pleasing refs. Ph: 03-9756-6191.

HOUSE OR COTTAGE SITTING AVAILABLE: Mid-term, country Vic, 1½ hrs from Melbourne or Sapphire Coast, NSW. Single professional, 45, n/s, n/d, passionate gardener, practical all-rounder. References avail. Ph: Karin, 03-5962-4496.

NYMBOIDA, NSW, long or shorter term, fully furnished country home, wood heater, ceiling fans, wide verandahs, full river frontage, private. Must be clean & caring. No pets – birdlife re-established. Bond & $150 p/w (not for sale). Inspect: 02-6649-5222. Owner: 03-6249-5312.

COST OF ADS

Cost of Grassified ads does not include any extra formatting: extra bold text, indents, spaces, stars or other symbols. If you require an ad with formatting please enquire about our display advertising rates. Call Sue on 03-5792-4000.

HONEST MATURE MAN WANTED to help take care of approx 25 ac in northern Tasmania in exchange for accom (sep cabin): shared kitchen, amenities & power. Genuine experience required in all general work & maintenance. Prefer n/s with plenty of self-motivation. Apply in writing to: Box 22, BEACONSFIELD 7270.

BEAUTIFUL MACLEAY ISLAND near Brisbane: Lovely house to rent & love on ¾ ac. Spacious native garden, f/trees, space for vegies, some maintenance provided. Low rent for suitable tenant. No cats please. Reference required. Ph: Irene, 0403-380-285.

OPPORTUNITIES

WANTED, VOLUNTEERS ON PROPOSED WILDLIFE RESORT. Work with us for a few months & learn about wildlife, the bush & horsemanship (Arabian) in the beautiful Kimberley. Work alongside a true stockman who worked for the pioneer family Durak. Food & accom $15 per day. Nonsmokers only. Ph: 08-9167-8891. Email: roysretreat@westnet.com.au

LIFESTYLE OPPORTUNITY: Semi-retired couple/partners wanted for alternative health centre. Must be interested in people & health. Free accom 4 b/r home. Part-time job, maintenance & assistance in centre, located in beautiful r/forest of northern NSW. Ring us: 02-6636-6176. Email: sinecera@nor.com.au

FOR SALE

MOTOR HOME, 'TOAD HAUL': reliable 1969 Comair Bedford, 9 m long with 7 m annexes both sides, 5 lt, gas/petrol. Good tyres, fully equipped kitchen with laminated timber benchtops. Shower, gas HWS, wired for 240/12V. Converted by designer owner. $20,000. Ph: Pat & Paul for more details, 08-8389-8181. Live your dream!

'EARTH GARDEN' MAGAZINES, nos 63 – 65, 80, 90 – 121. $80 + postage. Ph: 0403-247-795.

MONGOLIAN YURTS: top quality, decorated, eco-friendly, authentically made, imported new from Mongolia. Usual size 6 m diameter, AU$7975, other sizes avail on order. Use as bedroom, guesthouse, studio, tourist accom, initial dwelling on bare land etc. Fully furnished yurts avail too. Ask for an info pack. Ph: Viktor, Australia, 03-9482-2238. PO Box 1381, FITZROY NORTH, Vic 3068. Website: www.mongolianadventures.com

1972 BEDFORD BUS, diesel motor. Runs well, unregistered, 10.5 m, 2 door. Converted to comfortable practical living space. $12,500. Ph: 07-4666-6080.

TOYOTA HI ACE CAMPERVAN HI ROOF: 1992, professional fit-out, LP gas & petrol. Economical touring van prepared for round Australia trip, NSW registration. Well maintained since new. $14,000. Ph owner to inspect: 0422-043-864.

GRASSIFIEDS

FOR SALE

BULK HERBAL EXTRACTOR. Automatic 240V machine. Quality solid extracts from water & ice. Free DVD. Ph: 02-6734-6322.

PROPERTY WANTED

RENT TO BUY, vendor terms, 5 – 20 ac of land, Tasmania, Melbourne. Ph: Lloyd, 0428-129-911 or email: lloydcalwin@yahoo.com

PUBLICATIONS

HOME EDUCATION, for info send SAE to: Home Education Network, PO Box 461, DAYLESFORD 3460.

SUPPRESSED & UNUSUAL TECHNOLOGIES CATALOGUE: free energy devices, antigravity, hydrogen fuel, magnetic motors, alternate fuels & engines, high mileage, 200+ topics. Send 5 x Aust 50 c stamps to: Lostech Archive, PO Box 456-R, TOLGA, Qld 4882, Aust.

'NIMBIN NEWS MAGAZINE', is a cooperatively run access magazine with articles & information from Nimbin & other areas. We cover concerns relevant to alternative lifestylers & others looking for the most sustainable way. We are one of the longest running alternative magazines & the Nimbin bioregion is at the forefront in the development of sustainable systems. As networkers we scan many mags for suitable & scarce information for our readers. Subscription: 6 issues for $20, sample $3.50. Back copies 5 for $12 posted. PO Box 209, NIMBIN 2480. *Beyond the Rainbow* – literary mag. Sub: $18 per year for 6 editions. Email: nimbinnews@nrg.com.au

'NEW VEGETARIAN & NATURAL HEALTH', the magazine of the Natural Health & Vegetarian societies. Subscribe today, $30 yearly, & receive: 4 vital magazines, discounts at participating health food stores & natural therapies practitioners listed in magazine. Head Office, 28/541 High St, PENRITH, NSW 2750. Ph: 02-4721-5068.

LIKE CHOOKS OR DUCKS? You need *Starting Out With Chickens*, & *Starting Out With Ducks and Geese*. Books are paperback size, 56 pages, illustrated. Great for beginners. Buy 1 at $9.95 incl p&h or 2 for $16.95 incl p&h. Australasian Poultry, PO Box 438, SEYMOUR 3661 or ph: 03-5792-4000.

'THE MIRACLE OF MULCH' by Mary Horsfall: Mulch builds up organic matter, fertility & biodiversity in your soil for long-term garden health. *The Miracle Of Mulch* has vital mulching know-how so you can save water, save money & help the environment. Easy-to-read layout, great pics. $20 for signed copy from author, incl postage, $35 for 2. Ph: 0417-569-411, or write: Notable Products, PO Box 101, EUROA 3666.

NINETY 'GRASS ROOTS' MAGAZINES: 38 – 147, few missing. $150 + postage. Ph: 03-5146-0031.

DEADLINES: GR 175 - 28 APRIL
GR 176 – 29 JUNE

BOOKS, NEW AND OLD. Australiana, lifestyle, Pacific, biography, horticulture, gardening, outdoors. Lists avail. BA & JM Wallace, Box 325, PORTLAND 3305.

'NATIVE STINGLESS BEES' for profit or pleasure – how to get started, pollination/honey potential in Qld. Detailed info booklets, packed with photographs, diagrams. For free catalogue, send name, address & 50 c stamp to: ANBRC, Box 74-G4, NORTH RICHMOND, NSW 2754.

MARJORIE BLIGH BOOKS FOR SALE: *At Home With Marjorie Bligh* – $15; *Marjorie Bligh's A – Z Of Gardening* – $12.50; *Marjorie Bligh's Homely Hints On Everything* – $12.50; *Life Is For Living* – $15; *Tasmania And Beyond* – $15; *Crafts, Old, New, Recycled* – $15. Please add postage of $7.90 for 1 – 3 books. Send cheque or money order to Marjorie Bligh, 163 Madden St, DEVONPORT 7310. Remember to include your address.

WELCOME TO A BRAND NEW PENPAL NEWSLETTER for ladies. Free membership. Write for further details (sending 2 x 50 c stamps): Ulysses Penpal Newsletter, PO Box 5032, BUNDABERG WEST, Qld 4670.

READING, MATHS, SPELLING for teachers, parents, students (K – 12): 1 DVD & 2 CDs – $48. Website: www.bark3rs.com

FOOD & KITCHEN

HOME STONE FLOUR MILLS – WHEATGRASS JUICERS. Mill your own stoneground wholemeal flour for cakes & bread with a Retsel Little Ark stone flour mill. Start juicing wheatgrass juice at home. Visit www.retsel.com.au 'Endorsed by Housewives' Association.' Write for catalogue: PO Box 712, DANDENONG 3175, enclose 3 postage stamps. Ph: 03-9795-2725. Distributors' enquiries welcome.

STONEGROUND FLOUR in-home, with a SCHNITZER German quality hand or electric stone mill, 6 models from $178. SCHNITZER MILLS, PO Box 747, KATOOMBA 2780. Ph: 02-8205-7304. Website: www.schnitzer.com.au

GARDEN & ORCHARD

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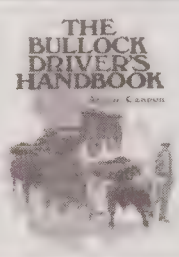

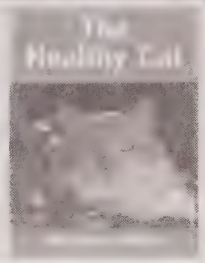

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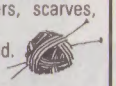

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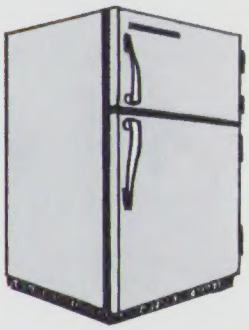

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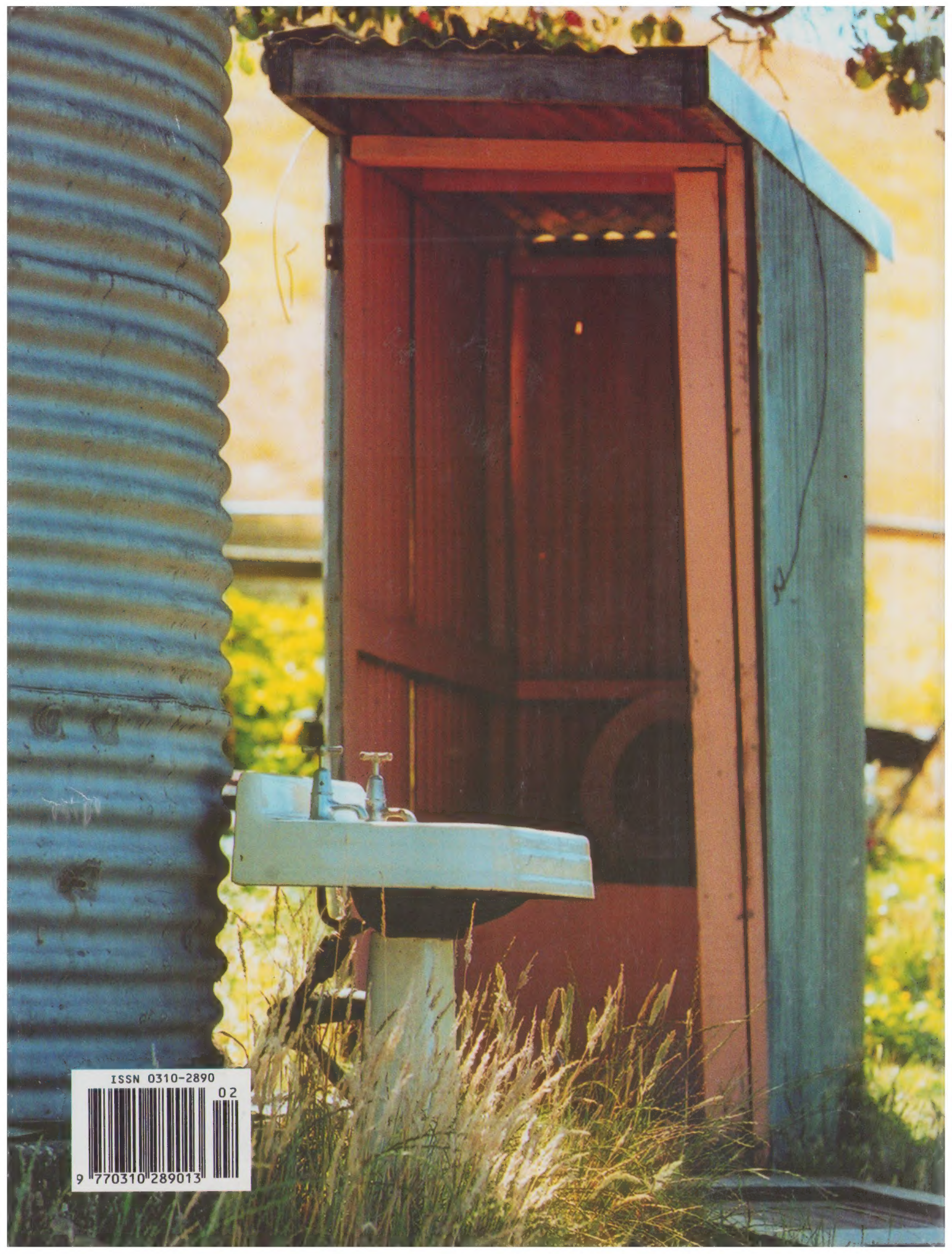

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